EXCLUSIVE: 7 HOURS OF TWITCH AND YOUTUBE GAMEPLAY

XBOX ONE

SUPER EXCLUSIVE

KILLING BATMAN

ROCKSTEADY INTERROGATED
UNMASKING THE VILLAIN
GOTHAM CITY EXPLORED

THE BIGGEST **GAMING VIDEOS** DISSECTED

20 TIPS FOR ADVANCED WARFARE ONLINE

WHAT'S NEXT FOR XBOX ONE?

REVEALING THE SHOCKING PLANS THAT'LL CHANGE THE CONSOLE WAR FOREVER

MASTER CHIEF COLLECTIO
SUNSET OVERDRIVE
PROJECT SPARK **FABLE LEGEND**
DYING LIGHT **DRAGON AGE**
INQUISITION PES 2015 **THE CRE**

HOMEFRONT THE REVOLUTION
THE SURPRISE HIT OF NEXT YEAR?

BATTLEFIELD HARDLINE
HANDS-ON WITH 2015'S BIGGEST SHOOTER

EVOLVE'S MONSTER SECRETS
BECOME GAMING'S FIERCEST CREATURE

RAINBOW SIX SIEGE UNCOVERED
UBISOFT DETAILS SHOCKING NEW INFO

ISSUE 118

XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE
HALO
THE MASTER CHIEF COLLECTION
16

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Microsoft Game Studios

DEVELOPER
343 Industries

GAME TYPE
It's bloody Halo

PLAYERS
1-16

DLC
Yes (Halo 4: Spartan Ops)

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Hard

NEED TO UNLOCK
Thanks a Killion (20G)

IN BRIEF

343 Industries has remastered the entire Master Chief saga, bringing *Halo 1, 2, 3* and *4* – along with all 100 multiplayer maps – into the next-generation as a new breed of 60fps shooters.

HALO
THE MASTER CHIEF COLLECTION

halowaypoint.com/en-gb /Halo @Halo

Hail to the Chief

Halo: The Master Chief Collection is an overwhelming, if not entirely intimidating, package. In many ways, it's a rite of passage for every Xbox gamer. It's an historical collection that not only succeeds in expertly highlighting the evolution of the *Halo* franchise, but – and perhaps more importantly – in mapping a timeline of modern first-person shooter design, without ever feeling like your eyes are being eviscerated by retro-grade graphics.

The last 12 months have been inundated with HD remasters, and it's easy to dismiss them as stopgaps in a publisher's otherwise empty release schedule. But it takes just one look at *The Master Chief Collection*'s content, presentation and execution to understand that there's a right way and a wrong way to push old games onto new systems. 343 Industries gets it absolutely right as it pulls *Halo: Combat Evolved*, *Halo 2*, *Halo 3* and *Halo 4* – not to mention over 100 multiplayer maps from across the series – onto Xbox One and gives each game the 1080p/60fps polish that so many other developers are struggling to achieve and maintain.

As you're currently holding this copy of **X-ONE** in your hands, you're no doubt aware that each of the games presented in this collection are some of the most critically and commercially successful first-person shooters of all time. But nostalgia can be a bit of a bitch; and so there's every chance that 11 years of improvements, refinements and shifts in Bungie's design philosophy have been lost to you. Rediscovering this has been a personal highlight for this particular critic.

Blasting through each campaign reveals the majesty of the series. *Halo: CE* revelled in combat sandboxes that sought to highlight and establish *Halo*'s unmistakable trinity of gunplay, grenades and movement. *Halo 2* introduced many console gamers to the majesty of dual wielding and, more importantly, to the potential of online multiplayer via Xbox Live. *Halo 3* held greater story ambitions, as well as introducing its innovative Forge map-editing and Theatre replay modes into play, while *Halo 4* sought to push player abilities, more sophisticated gunplay and expansive levels into the franchise.

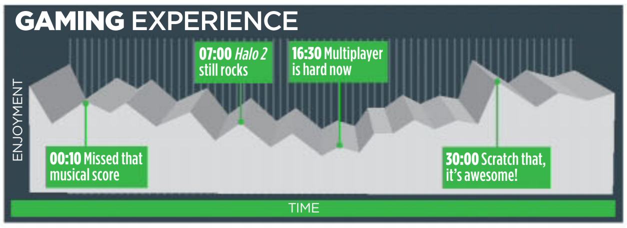
It's remarkable how incredibly each campaign holds up so many years on. Even with nostalgia clouding our memory, we feel pretty confident in saying that *Halo* never felt like it struggled at 30fps. It never felt restricted by the number, and it has certainly never controlled sluggishly because of it. But the leap towards a steady 60 has unreservedly benefited each game. The controls are more responsive, the action is smoother, and the gunplay feels faster and more immediate than ever before. It isn't a fundamental change – if you were never enamoured with *Halo*'s purposeful movement and slow turning circles, this won't change your mind – but for fans, it's made four great games even better.

> "The Anniversary treatment has made Halo 2 feel fresh and exciting all over again"

Halo CE: Anniversary (released on Xbox 360 back in 2011, *Halo 3* and *Halo 4* have all been given slight visual tweaks to ensure they run on Xbox One to the best of their ability. *Halo 3*, in particular, has largely benefited from lighting improvements and a bump in resolution, though the real star of the package is *Halo 2*. It's been given a lavish overhaul in celebration of its 10th anniversary, and in many ways, it's better than ever before.

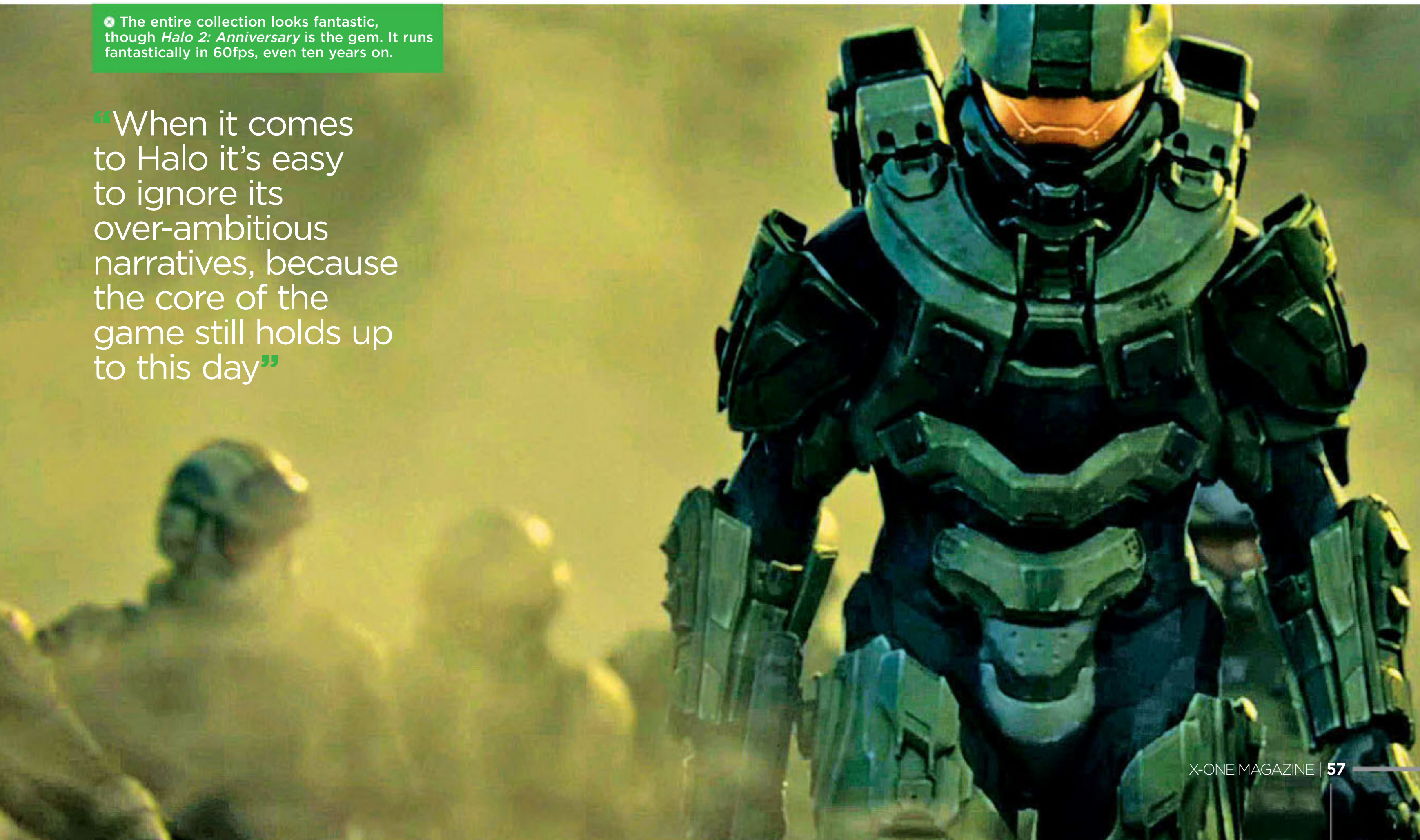
The *Anniversary* treatment has made *Halo 2* feel fresh and exciting all over again. Ten years ago, Bungie – despite the game's narrative flaws – created something of an FPS masterpiece. 343i might have given it a new coat of paint, but the game is still a delight to play today because the underlying experience is still so freaking solid. The core game has been untouched by 343i: that means the original

GAMING EXPERIENCE



Going back through the entire collection, it's easy to see the genesis of the entire modern FPS genre. *Halo*'s impact on the industry is insane.

Forget about *Titanfall, Call Of Duty, Battlefield* and *Destiny – Halo: The Master Chief Collection* is all we will be playing for the next few months.



The entire collection looks fantastic, though *Halo 2: Anniversary* is the gem. It runs fantastically in 60fps, even ten years on.

> "When it comes to Halo it's easy to ignore its over-ambitious narratives, because the core of the game still holds up to this day"

EXTENDED EXPERIENCE

HALO NIGHTFALL

■ *Halo*'s latest venture into the live-action space, *Nightfall*, gives players a first glimpse at *Halo 5: Guardian*'s new co-star Agent Locke in action for the very first time.

HALO: FORWARD UNTO DAWN

■ What this web series lacks in budget it makes up for with big aspirations and decent execution. Fans of *Halo 4* will want to give this a look over.

HALO LEGENDS

■ If anime is your thing, check out *Halo Legends,* a collection of seven shorts from seven different Japanese production houses. It's pretty awesome.

TRENDING

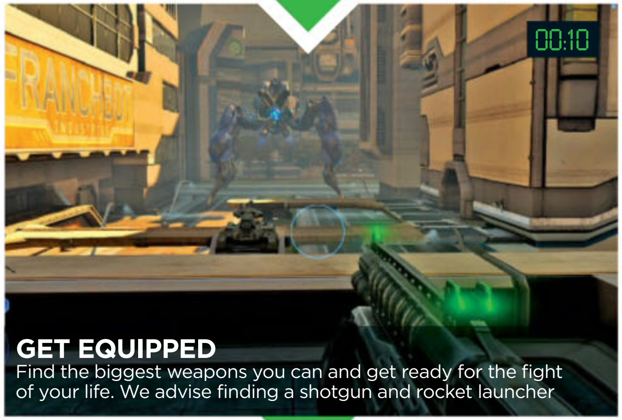
#HALO5BETA

■ Everyone that purchases *The Master Chief Collection* will have access to *Halo 5: Guardians*' beta. It will begin 29 December and run to 18 January.

SEQUENCE

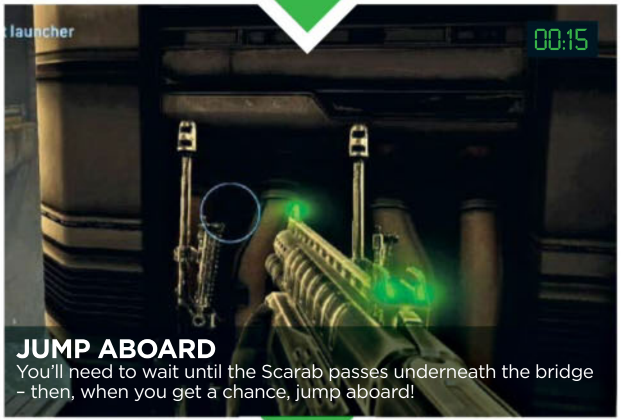
Toppling Halo's biggest beast

Encounters with the Scarab in Halo are some of the most exciting in the series – and they're even better in 60fps



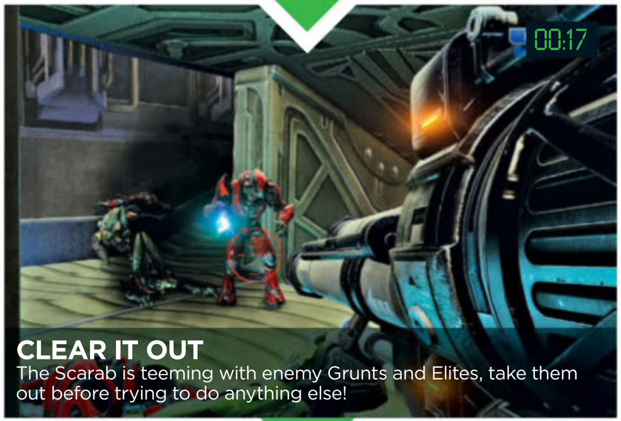
GET EQUIPPED

Find the biggest weapons you can and get ready for the fight of your life. We advise finding a shotgun and rocket launcher



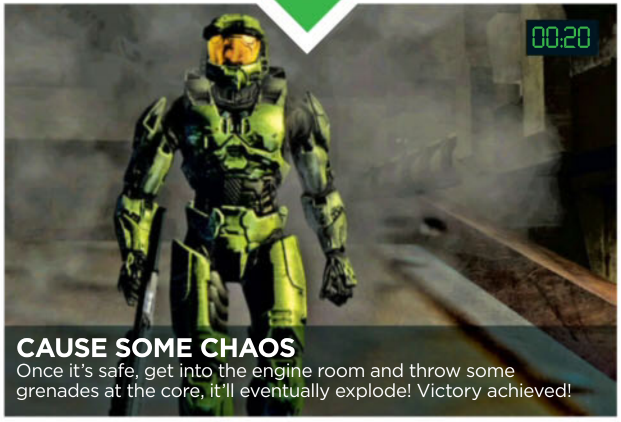
JUMP ABOARD

You'll need to wait until the Scarab passes underneath the bridge – then, when you get a chance, jump aboard!



CLEAR IT OUT

The Scarab is teeming with enemy Grunts and Elites, take them out before trying to do anything else!



CAUSE SOME CHAOS

Once it's safe, get into the engine room and throw some grenades at the core, it'll eventually explode! Victory achieved!

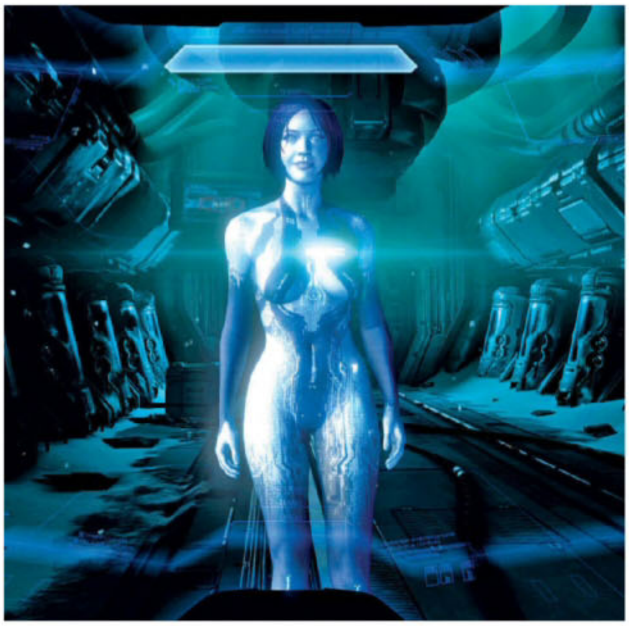
> "The Master Chief Collection is a unique opportunity to explore the development of the Xbox's most important IP"

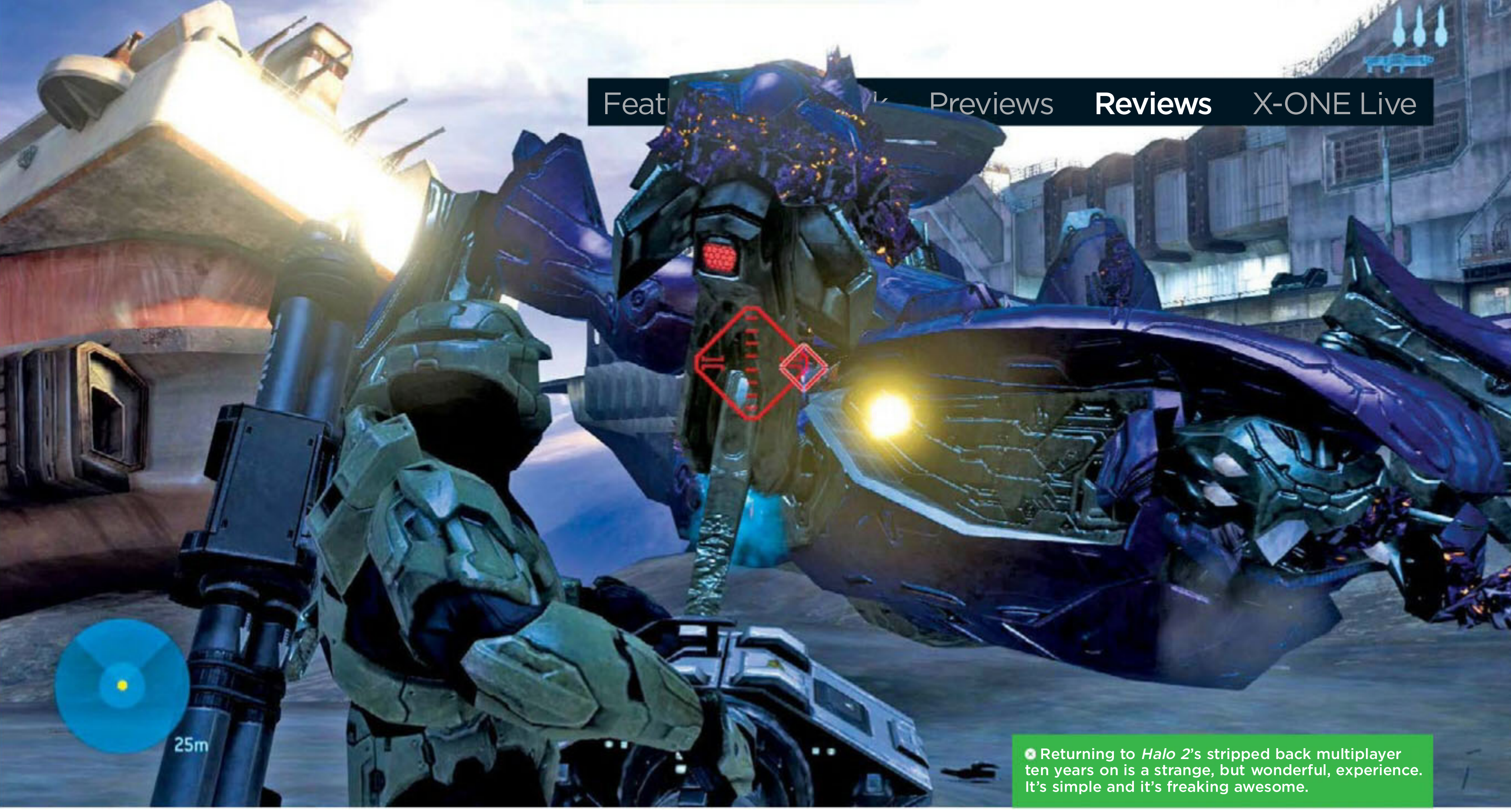
graphics, sound and encounters are still intact, albeit with a higher frame-rate and completely redone visual presentation. It's not the best looking game on the Xbox One – not by a long shot – but the new character models, lighting, rerecorded sound effects and musical score do wonders to make it playable two generations on.

As with *Halo: CE Anniversary*, the ability to transition between the original visuals and sound effects returns, though it is now an instant transition – instead of the irritating fade-to-black switch from before. Admittedly, we spent a fair amount of time going between the two – and would often find ourselves sat in 2004's graphics without realising it. The outdoor environments look poor in comparison to lavish indoor structures, while we are still convinced the original Martin O'Donnell score and lo-fi sound effects help drag you unequivocally into *Halo*'s world and Master Chief's intergalactic struggle than 343i's rerecorded efforts.

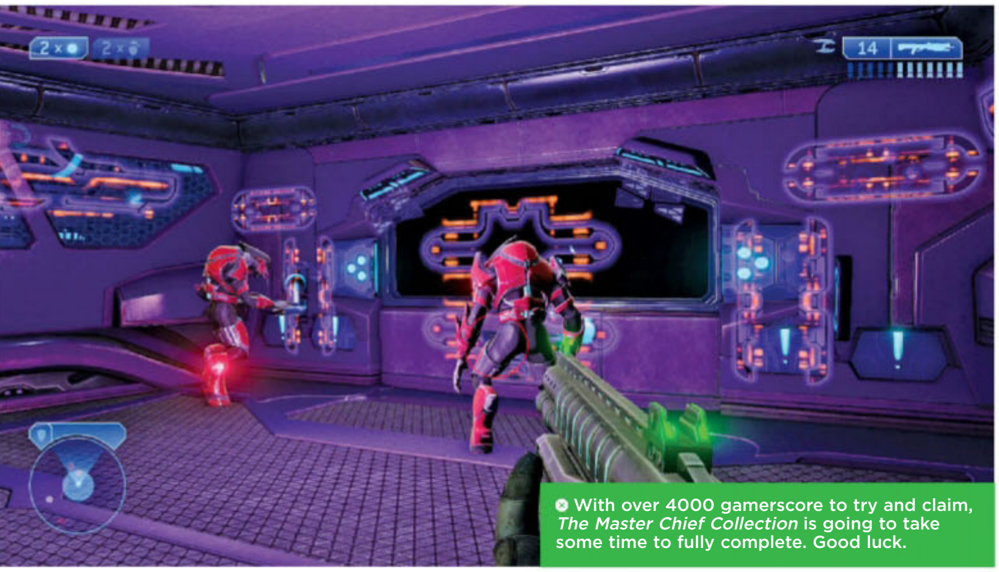
Still, *Halo 2: Anniversary* presents something of an interesting quandary. While it's undoubtedly the most fun and enjoyable game in the franchise, it's still marred by a disappointing structure and narrative. Those legacy *Halo* fans with us will no doubt recall the infuriating cliff-hanger from *Halo 2* the first time out – and experiencing that all over again was akin to a friend inadvertently dredging up uncomfortable memories from your past before making a sharpish move for the door. The blow is softened somewhat by not having to wait three years to finish the fight – you can jump into *Halo 3* within seconds now, of course – not to mention the sensational new cutscenes from Blur Studios, which go a long way to making *Halo 2* feel more epic and cinematic than ever before.

When it comes to *Halo* it's easy to ignore its over-ambitious narratives, because the core of the game – its tight gunplay, its 30 seconds of fun mantra – still holds up to this day. It's even easier to explore and enjoy the content thanks to the unified and ambitious menu system. Jesus, look at us gushing over a goddamn *menu system*, but it means for the first time you can effortless hop between

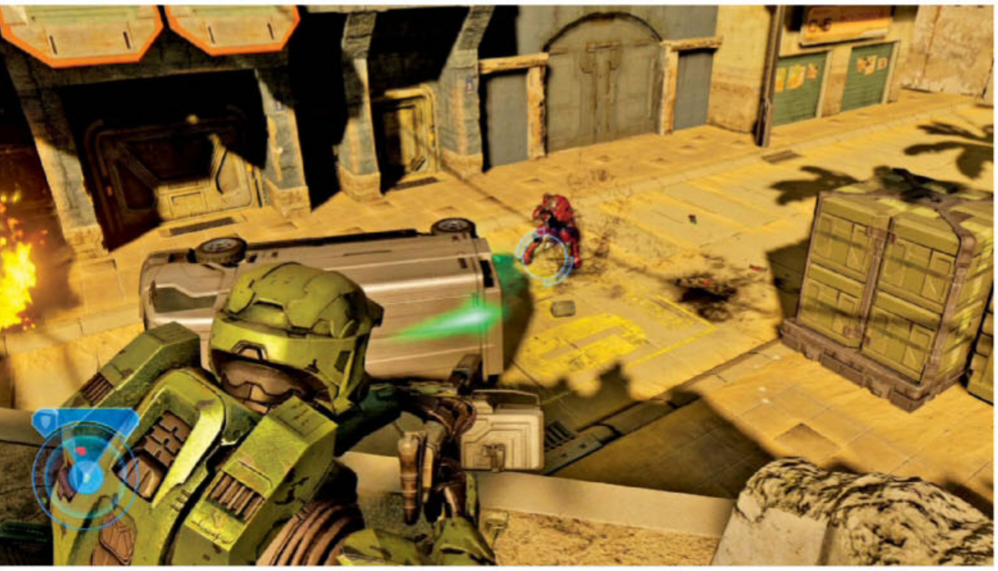




Returning to *Halo 2*'s stripped back multiplayer ten years on is a strange, but wonderful, experience. It's simple and it's freaking awesome.



With over 4000 gamerscore to try and claim, *The Master Chief Collection* is going to take some time to fully complete. Good luck.



Halo's greatest encounters. *The Master Chief Collection* even presents playlists build around specific themes, levels and encounters. It's a wonderful way to experience the evolution of *Halo* – and nowhere is this more apparent than in the collection's ridiculous collection of multiplayer maps, modes and matchmaking set-ups.

With every multiplayer map from across the series included, it's the ultimate trip down a bloodstained memory lane. Just like the campaign, *Halo 2*'s multiplayer still feels fantastic in 60fps. The maps, in particular, are still some of the best to grace Xbox Live – they are a testament to how unchallenged Bungie was in multiplayer design back in 2004. What will be interesting over the coming weeks is to see where fans divert their attention with so much choice.

Halo: CE introduces maps into play that many gamers would never have played, but it's impossible to overlook how unbalanced the guns were back then. *Halo 3* still feels as fun and chaotic to play as it did in 2007, while *Halo 4* still feels like a misstep for the franchise as it introduced loadouts and sprinting into the otherwise balanced Halo multiplayer experience.

The *Anniversary* maps are also something of a letdown – six classic *Halo 2* maps rebuilt in a brand new *Halo* engine designed for Xbox One – as they don't feel as balanced or solid as the originals. Movement feels restricted, the weapon balance not nearly as tight. We'd say it was down to our rose-tinted glasses, but with the six original maps but a button press away, it's easy to make the comparison and even easier to see them as lacklustre.

Still, *Halo: The Master Chief Collection* is a must-own package for any FPS fan. For the seasoned *Halo* fan it's a great trip down memory lane, and for the new blood it's a great primer before *Halo 5: Guardians* lands in 2015. Hail to the Chief, he's still the king when it comes to FPS action on Xbox. *Halo: The Master Chief Collection* gave us the chance to finish the fight all over again, and we couldn't be happier.

JOSH WEST

VERDICT

Halo: The Master Chief Collection is an incredible historical document, charting the rise and success of the Xbox's biggest franchises. Vital to any collection.

9

XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE
CALL OF DUTY
ADVANCED WARFARE
18

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
Sledgehammer Games

GAME TYPE
Futuristic FPS

PLAYERS
1-16

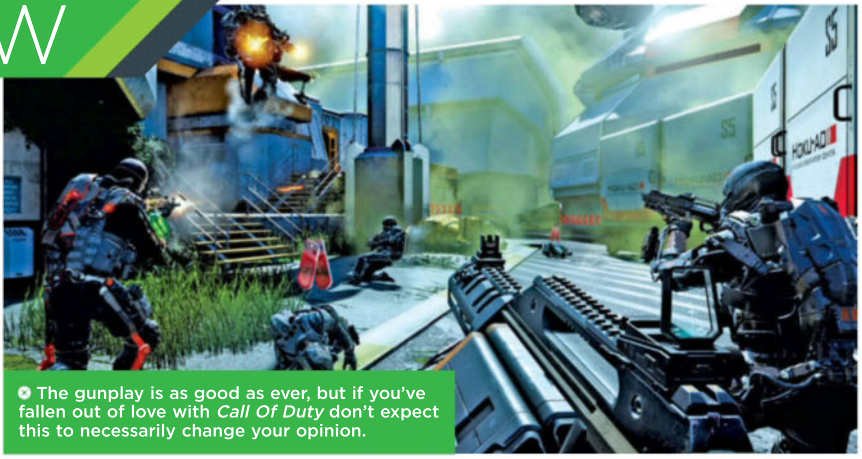
DLC
Yes

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

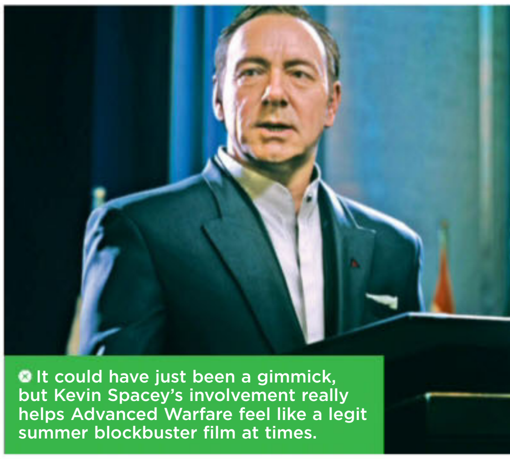
NEED TO UNLOCK
Power Changes Everything (50G)

IN BRIEF

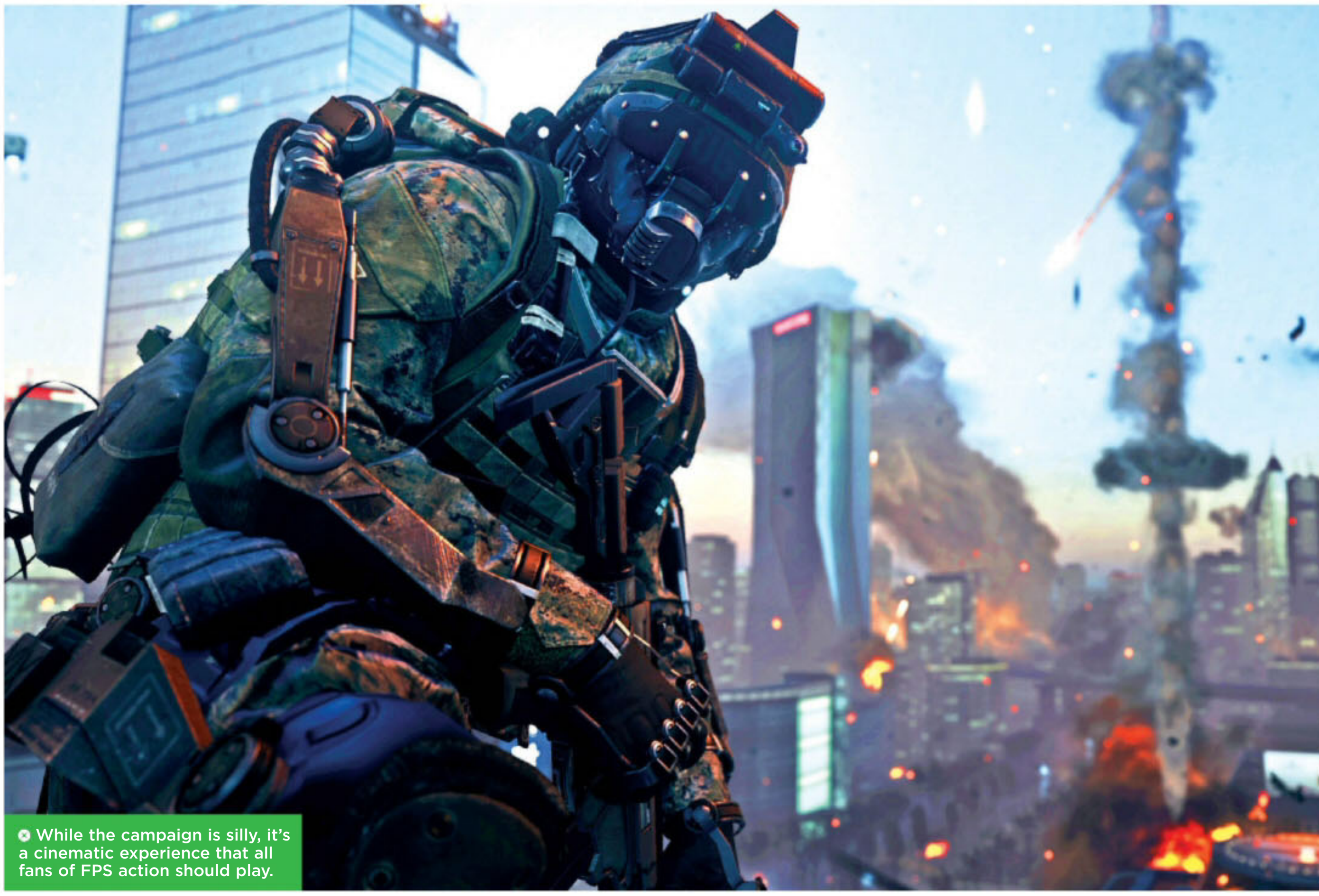
Sledgehammer Games comes off the back of helping finish Modern Warfare 3 with its first solo Call Of Duty, Advanced Warfare



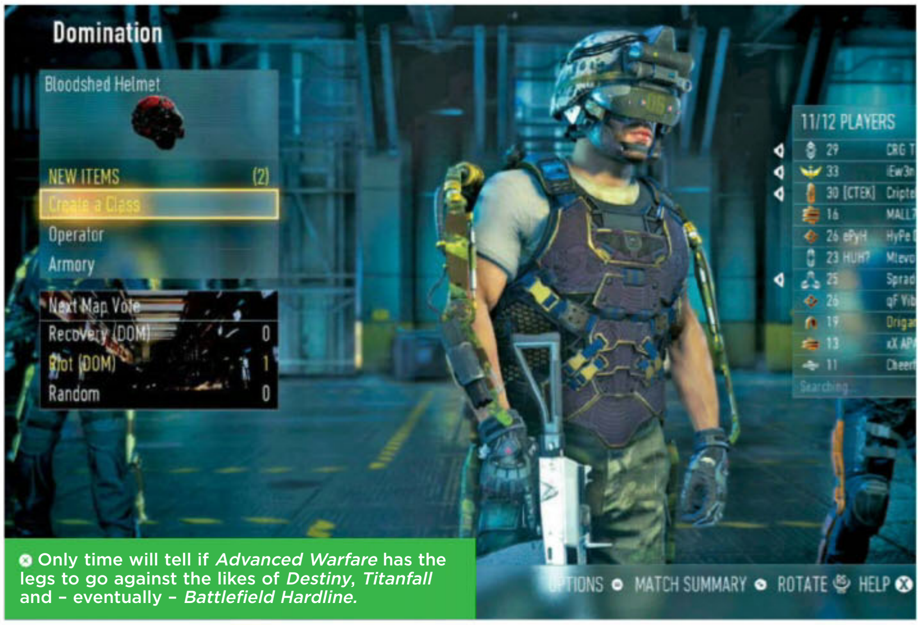
The gunplay is as good as ever, but if you've fallen out of love with *Call Of Duty* don't expect this to necessarily change your opinion.



It could have just been a gimmick, but Kevin Spacey's involvement really helps Advanced Warfare feel like a legit summer blockbuster film at times.



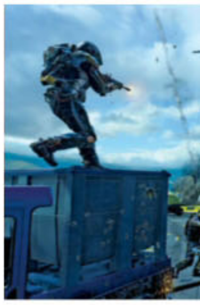
While the campaign is silly, it's a cinematic experience that all fans of FPS action should play.


Domination
Bloodshed Helmet
NEW ITEMS (2)
Create a Class
Operator
Armory
Next Map Vote
Recovery (DOM) 0
Riot (DOM) 1
Random 0
11/12 PLAYERS
OPTIONS
MATCH SUMMARY
ROTATE
HELP

Only time will tell if *Advanced Warfare* has the legs to go against the likes of *Destiny*, *Titanfall* and – eventually – *Battlefield Hardline*.

TRENDING #SILLYCOD

While the campaign is very entertaining, it is rife with stupid button prompts, including one that – absurdly – has you 'Press X To Pay Respects' at a military funeral, *cringe*.



CALL OF DUTY ADVANCED WARFARE

www.callofduty.com/advancedwarfare /CallOfDuty @CallOfDuty

Time heals all wounds

Activision has been forcing *COD* down our throats so aggressively over the last five months that the hype train looked destined to run off its rails. But with the game finally in our hands we can place all of the publisher's posturing to one side and see *Advanced Warfare* for what it is. And you know what? It's great to finally receive a *Call Of Duty* game that isn't content with simply celebrating brand success every year with outdated design and all-around mediocrity. It doesn't matter that Sledgehammer Games' debut solo release is a package of carefully considered iterations disguised as innovations, nor that Kevin Spacey's dead eyes continued to haunt us long after the end credits rolled, because it is just so damn fun to play.

Advanced Warfare has made fundamental alterations to *Call Of Duty*'s mechanics and player movement, and it's all thanks to the Exo. As the theatre of war shifts fifty years into the future, players now find themselves equipped with a robotic exoskeleton suit that enables them to run faster, jump higher and hit harder. Against all expectations, this isn't some half-baked attempt to compete with the likes of *Titanfall* and *Destiny*. Instead, it has injected an unprecedented amount of speed, verticality and evasive manoeuvring into a series that had become all too reliant on a fatiguing formula.

> "The crown jewel of the package, the multiplayer, is the best it's been since Black Ops II"

While the new setting has impacted the campaign in a positive way, it has – more importantly – ensured that the crown jewel of the package, the multiplayer, is the best it has been since *Black Ops II*. The Exo means that every player can now launch across the environment with double jumps, avoid enemy fire with swift ground dashes, and even utilise an array of *Crysis*-inspired future-tech abilities to try and turn the tide of an encounter in your favour. Truth be told, this could have quite easily broken *Call Of Duty*'s chaotic, albeit insanely fine-tuned, 60fps gunplay. But the seemingly bottomless Pick 13 custom loadout system, adapted from *Black Ops II*'s very own Pick 10, combined with some of the best map design *Call Of Duty* has ever offered, makes for a satisfying and rarely frustrating experience – at launch, at least. *Call Of Duty* has always had a learning curve relative to how long after launch you wait to play, but it feels like *Advanced Warfare*'s could extend massively. Ground dashing, mapped to a double click of the left stick, can feel clumsy. This has led to many players ditching the manoeuvre – making it a killing field for the player (us, sorry) that manages to power through that throbbing pain in their thumb.

Still, despite its offensive capabilities, the Exo encourages better defensive positioning. It has introduced the opportunity to inject new strategy into tired respawn routines and attack patterns. What's impressive still is how it's pushing silent players to organically work together in packs. Covering one another, responding to new threats with intricately designed classes and pushing forwards in unison. *Call Of Duty* may have slowed down as a result, but it makes you feel like a soldier in a small-scale war instead of a lone wolf desperately searching for someone to pump virtual lead into.

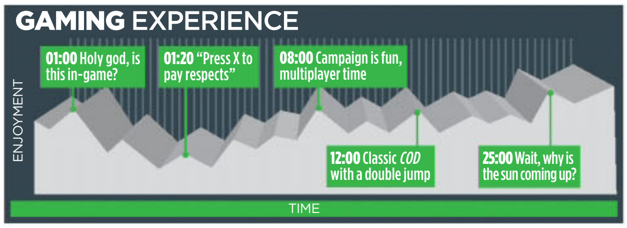
Surprisingly, the campaign in *Advanced Warfare* isn't just there to hold your attention on those rare occasions the servers go down this year either. The eight-hour single-player is undoubtedly the best since 2007's *Modern Warfare*. It presents a constant escalation of power struggles and never lets up. Sure, Kevin 'Academy Award-winning' Spacey and Troy 'too pretty for war' Baker are great as the two leads, but there's a lot to enjoy aside from the incredible visuals. The action is fast and frantic, the gunplay as good as ever, and the story isn't completely terrible. It's stupid and places more emphasis on bombastic action than anything else, obviously, but then again last year we had no major qualms with piloting a dog around a warzone in *Ghosts*. That's videogames for you.

One point of constant frustration, however, was how the game switches Exo abilities out between missions. Having our toys taken away was a pain, particularly because it often stripped away our capacity to double jump or use the awesome grappling hook. Sledgehammer gives you the ability to loosely upgrade your Exo – increasing your haul of grenades or reducing weapon recoil – but never goes as far as to let you chose your optimal loadout, which is a shame.

Sledgehammer Games has had three years to work on *Advanced Warfare* and the results speak for themselves. The studio has looked back across the whole franchise, cut the chaff that fans have grown increasingly disinterested with following *Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3* and *Ghosts*, and placed laser focus on the series' best elements.

JOSH WEST

GAMING EXPERIENCE



VERDICT

In many ways, the game is the perfect distillation of the franchise's core appeal. But it's still just *Call Of Duty*, don't expect it to revolutionise the industry.

8

XBOX 360

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Konami

DEVELOPER
PES Productions

GAME TYPE
Footy and stuff

PLAYERS
1-8

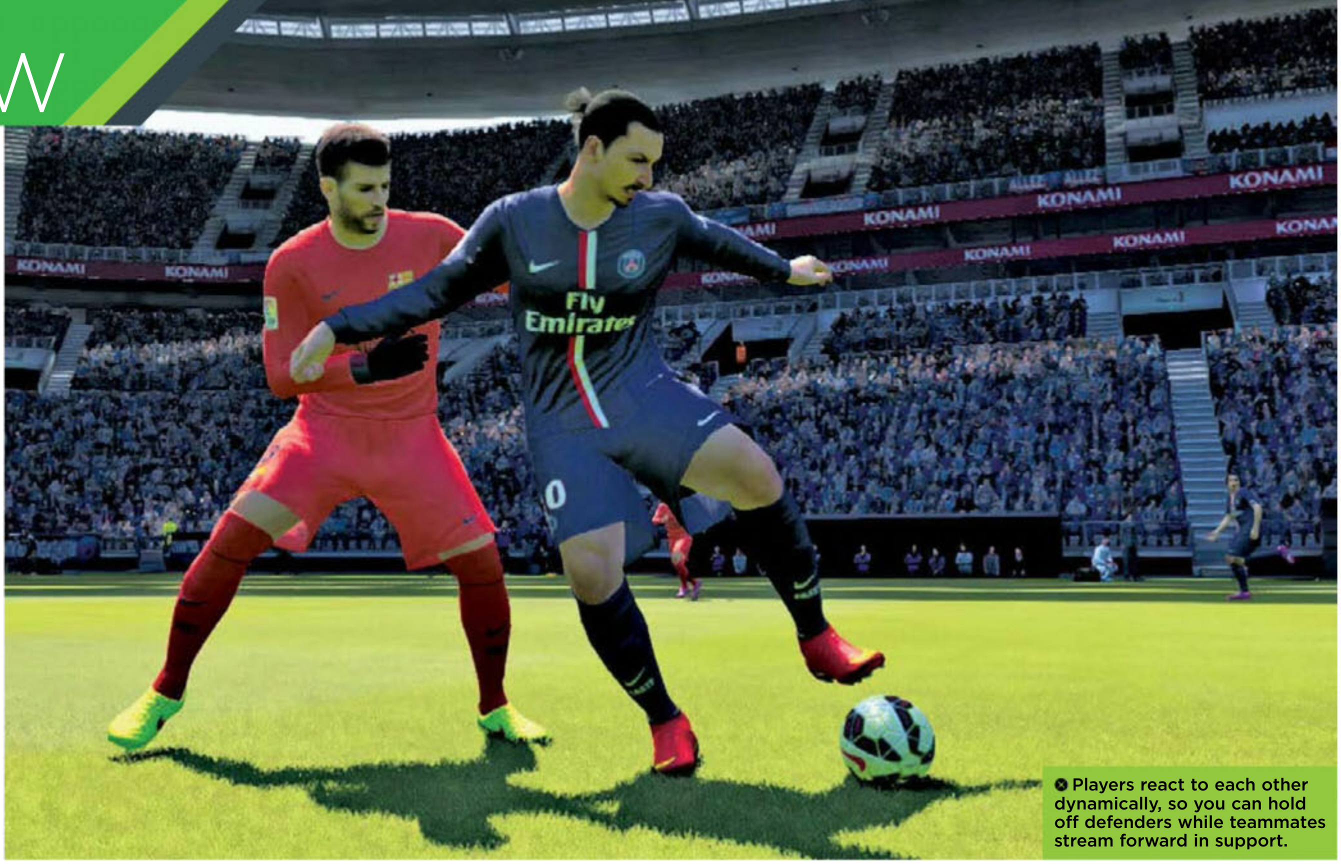
DLC
N/A

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

NEED TO UNLOCK
The Best of the Bunch (40G) Awarded for being named Man of the Match in a Team Play Lobby match

IN BRIEF

PES is back with a brand new engine, new player likenesses and new game modes. Become a manager in Master League and take your favourite team to the top, or just play a licensed Champions League match.



Players react to each other dynamically, so you can hold off defenders while teammates stream forward in support.

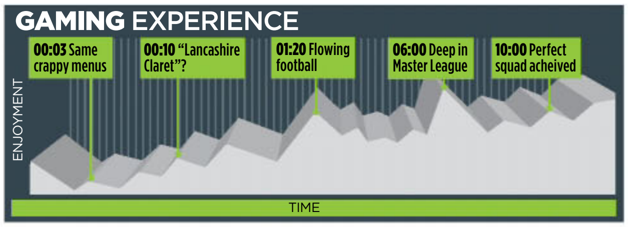
PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2015

www.pes.konami.com /PES @OfficialPES

Definitely in our top three football games this year

You know what's great about football? There are always upsets. Giant-killers in the cup, last-minute goals, and referee decisions that can decide the fate of a club's season. It's exciting, it's unpredictable, but more than anything it's fun. That's *PES 2015* in a nutshell. In the league of football videogames, *PES* is the underdog and *FIFA* has sat comfortably at the head of the table for the last few years, and while *PES* has played well, it simply couldn't produce the kind of quality that was required to win the league. But enough of these mixed metaphors; let's talk about this year's game.

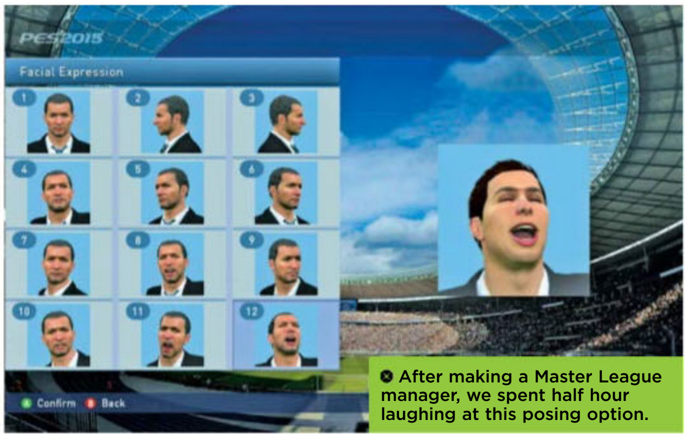
First off, there are plenty of improvements over *PES 2014*. AI, skilled dribbling, defending and tactics have all seen updates for the better, and we were really impressed with the player likenesses. It's not just big names – you'll be recognising a lot more than Ronaldo and Messi from these facial likenesses. Aside from this, the graphics haven't seen a huge update from last year's *PES 2014*. On the 360 version we played, crowds still moved in unison and the pitch still looks like a green carpet. It does detract from the realism slightly, but for those coming from *PES 2014* or *FIFA 14* on the 360 you won't be too disappointed.



There have been improvements to how these graphics are used, though. Konami's Fox Engine has been put to good use again – there are still slightly jerky moments, but overall the whole game feels slicker and more refined. Player animations are mostly natural, and the ball physics seem to feel just right. In fact, as we were putting together some lovely passing moves in our second game, it hit us – *PES 2015* is really, genuinely fun.

As we stroked the ball around the pitch we rarely found ourselves shouting 'NO, DON'T PASS IT TO HIM, YOU PLEB!' The game seemed to know what we were intending to do, and it was doing a very good job of helping us do it. This is, in part, thanks to a new AI. Teammates will make runs and move into space off the ball, while opposition AI will make it harder to play that killer through pass or track player runs. The result felt more like a real game of football, as we found ourselves holding the ball at the back and looking for space to move forward. One thing we did notice was that the through ball option feels a little too effective. As we held the Y button to pass, defenders were too slow to follow our advancing striker, or simply paused for a split second. Perhaps we're just really good at the game, but it's much more likely that it's simply a little unbalanced.

You'll find all the standard game modes you've come to expect from modern games, including a training area, major cups from around the world and exhibition matches. The menu system still feels outdated and clunky (something we complained about last year), which makes everything that little bit more frustrating. Master League is still the main focus, putting you in the manager's seat and challenging you to take your team to the top, or switch clubs to further your own career. It's incredibly deep, and it takes time to

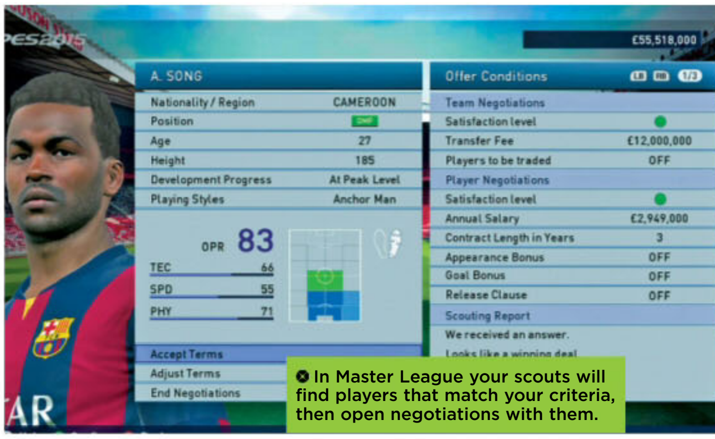


After making a Master League manager, we spent half hour laughing at this posing option.

TRENDING

#THRU BALLS

Slotting a through ball between two defenders makes you feel great, but is a little too easy.



A. SONG	
Nationality / Region	CAMEROON
Position	DMF
Age	27
Height	185
Development Progress	At Peak Level
Playing Styles	Anchor Man

OPR 83
TEC 66
SPD 55
PHY 71

Accept Terms
Adjust Terms
End Negotiations

£55,518,000

Offer Conditions	
Team Negotiations	
Satisfaction level	●
Transfer Fee	£12,000,000
Players to be traded	OFF
Player Negotiations	
Satisfaction level	●
Annual Salary	£2,949,000
Contract Length in Years	3
Appearance Bonus	OFF
Goal Bonus	OFF
Release Clause	OFF
Scouting Report	

We received an answer.
Looks like a winning deal

In Master League your scouts will find players that match your criteria, then open negotiations with them.

get your head around all of the options, but it's compelling and will last you for hours. That is, of course, as long as you can get over the lack of licensed teams. It's nothing new – *PES* has had unlicensed teams and leagues for years, but it's hard to feel the same excitement about an essential league tie when you're facing off against the mighty… West Midlands Village? Thankfully, editing options return, so while the kits might look a bit strange, you can adjust the names.

PES 2015 also brings micro-transactions. Don't worry; they're completely optional, and serve only those with too much spare money and not enough time to properly enjoy the game. We don't see them unbalancing online matches and they aren't required to unlock anything. They're in the game, you can use them or ignore them, and that's it.

We found it a little odd that the transition to *PES* after a few months of playing *FIFA* was so easy; within a few games we were pushing the difficulty setting up a notch. Don't worry – *PES* hasn't become a *FIFA* clone, but it's easier than we remember to make the jump. Controls are familiar, and while there are obvious differences in gameplay, it's not hard to move between the two. Most pleasing, though, was the way *PES 2015* captured the beautiful game. There might be a few small niggles that hold some people back, but this year's *PES* gets the most important thing right – making the football matches themselves great fun.

STEPHEN ASHBY

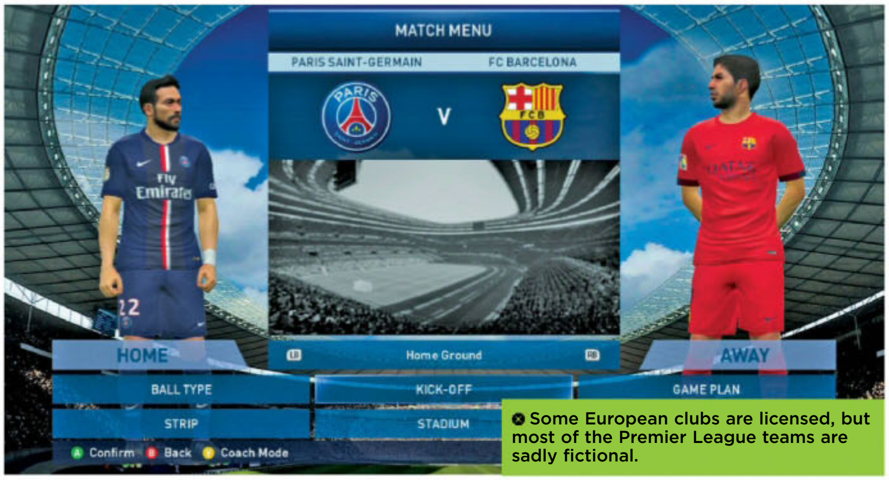
VERDICT

It's not perfect, but *PES 2015* is bloody good fun, although a few niggles still stop it taking the crown from *FIFA* for another year.

8

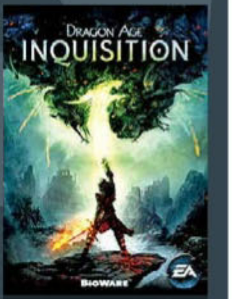
Carlos Tevez's skills of levitation thrill another crowd, including a dumbstruck Gareth Bale.

> "There are still slightly jerky moments, but overall the whole game feels slicker and more refined"



Some European clubs are licensed, but most of the Premier League teams are sadly fictional.

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER	**EA**
DEVELOPER	**BioWare**
GAME TYPE	**Action-RPG**
PLAYERS	**1-4**
DLC	**Confirmed regular (and free) multiplayer content drops**
ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY	**Moderate**
NEED TO UNLOCK	**Dragons' Bane (30G)**

IN BRIEF

Named the Herald of the Andraste and the only one who can stop demons poring forth from The Breach, you must unite Thedas under the banner of the Inquisition to end the threat of The Elder One.

DRAGON AGE INQUISITION

www.dragonage.com /dragonage @dragonage

Choose Your Own Adventure

Despite its title, *Dragon Age: Inquisition* is really only interested in asking one question: how do you want to play? It's evidently a notion that BioWare has considered during the development of its world, the characters, and the myriad tasks that have you exploring its snow-covered peaks, lush forests and arid scrubland. To this end, the developer has picked some of the strongest aspects of its own back catalogue and leveraged tropes established by other RPGs and MMOs to ensure that this fundamental question remains as open-ended as possible.

BioWare has done an admirable job on this front. You'll seldom feel funnelled down one particular path or forced to approach combat, character development or skill trees in a certain way, nor will you lack for missions or party options. In fact, there are often so many choices of what to do next and how to do it that it falls into the trap of simultaneously charging you with saving the world while offering you to option to fill your time with busywork. Ultimately, the sheer number of distractions on offer undermines the intended gravitas of a story that tries so hard to be epic.

> "The sheer number of distractions on offer undermines a story that tries so hard to be epic"

The abundance of choice starts from the ground up with character creation. A mix of four races, three character classes and a wealth of ability specialisations enable you to create anything from a dual-wielding Dwarven rogue to an elementally-charged Qunari mage. Saving the world is not a job for a single hero and so, for the most part, you are accompanied by three other characters that you can take direct control of, issue orders to or allow to govern themselves. There's a very basic tactics system through which you can prioritise use of your companions abilities and the health threshold at which they'll use potions, but it's just as valid a tactic to leave everything on default settings and take control of your own character in the action-orientated third-person mode.

It's here that the strain of ensuring that every option is as valid as the next begins to show. As such, the fuss surrounding the return of the tactical camera from the first *Dragon Age* game is largely unjustified. Being able to freeze the action during combat and pull back to an overview of the battlefield from where you can issue specific orders to party members and make better use of the inter-class combos is certainly an interesting idea. However, by making it one of several viable options in combat, BioWare has had to ensure that those that prefer their fights quick, dirty and without pause can still have a rewarding experience and this, in turn, limits its effectiveness.

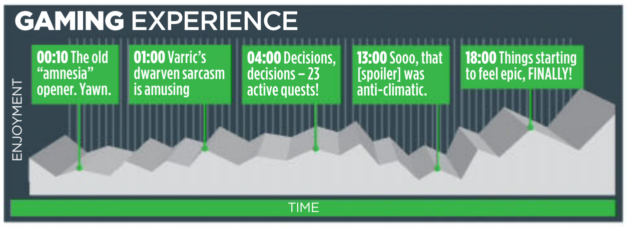
While your comrades' class builds are pre-set there are still plenty of choices to be made in deciding how to distribute their ability points as they level up. Alternatively, you can allow the AI to take care of that for you. While it's tempting to hit the auto-level button rather than pore over skill trees, especially early on when you may be getting to grips with your own characters' varied abilities, there is an immediate sense of disconnect that comes from letting the AI take care of itself. Multiplayer removes this burden by making you responsible for just one character with a pared-back move-set as you storm castles and ruins on wave-based loot runs. However, a lack of maps and game modes currently makes this an entertaining but ultimately superficial distraction.

Back at the keep, there's another front on which the war on terrible things is waged. By convening the Inquisition war council, made up of faces familiar to those of past *Dragon Age* titles, you can assign members to make forays across Thedas. These tasks take in work of the Inquisition – which never becomes as grisly or provocative as one might hope – and serve to open-up new areas to explore to progress the story or reaps rewards for helping to solve local disputes by proxy. By undertaking the smaller tasks you obtain power, which is the currency spent to further the Inquisition's reach, a thinly veiled measure to ensure that you're not rushing ahead to missions beyond your character's current pay-grade.

Dragon Age: Inquisition succeeds in many of the things it sets out to achieve and the fact that one the harshest criticisms that can be levelled at it is that it's occasionally muddled, unfocused and too eager to please should not keep a great many people from enjoying it. It's just a shame that in trying to be all things to all people it falls short of the triumphant return that fans have craved and the series deserved.

STACE HARMAN

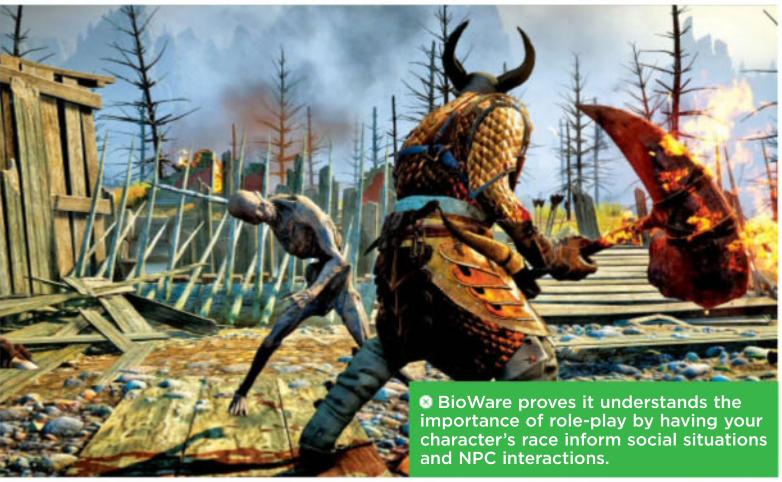
GAMING EXPERIENCE



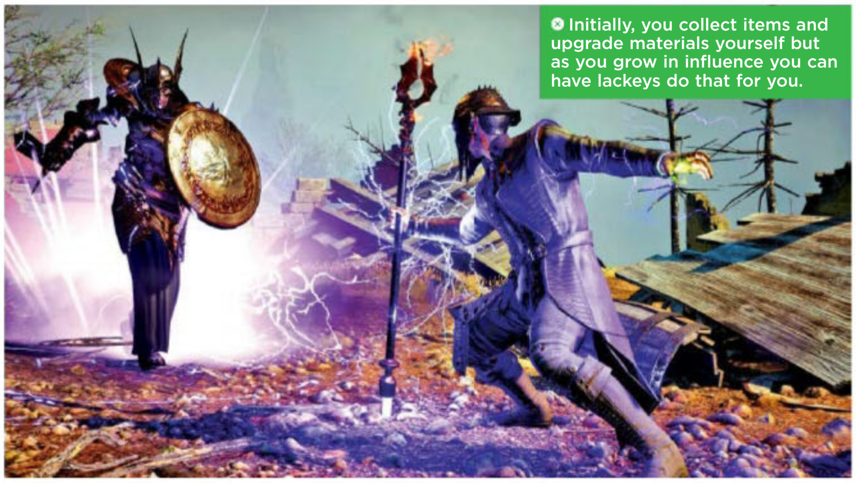
VERDICT

A competent if unspectacular return. *Dragon Age: Inquisition* offers an abundance of things to do but its pick 'n' mix approach undermines any wow factor.

7



BioWare proves it understands the importance of role-play by having your character's race inform social situations and NPC interactions.

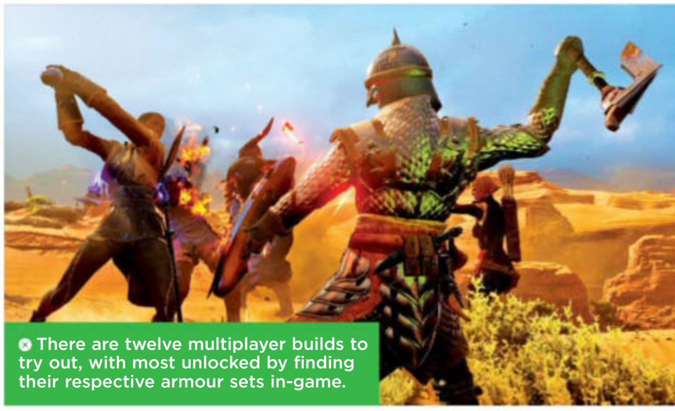


Initially, you collect items and upgrade materials yourself but as you grow in influence you can have lackeys do that for you.

TRENDING

#SPOILT FOR CHOICE

With a million and one ways to push the story along, a little less choice and a little more focus would actually have been beneficial.



There are twelve multiplayer builds to try out, with most unlocked by finding their respective armour sets in-game.

XBOX 360

XBOX 360
BORDERLANDS THE PRE-SEQUEL

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
2K

DEVELOPER
2K Australia

GAME TYPE
Loot-heavy shooter

PLAYERS
1-4

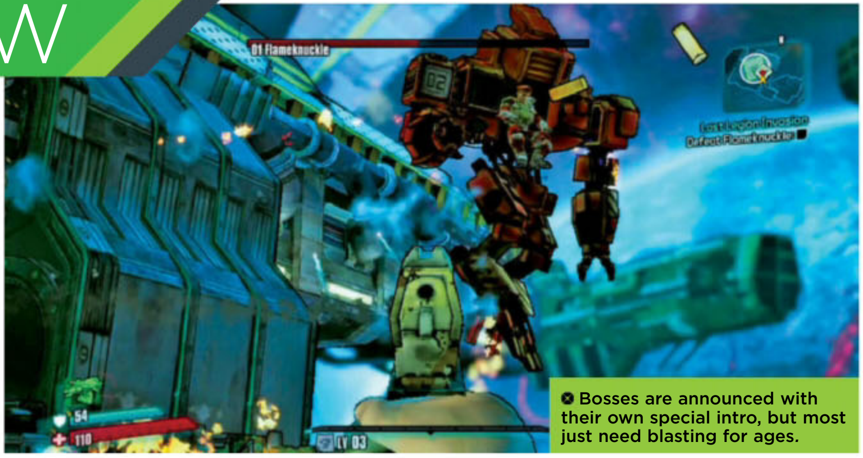
DLC
Not Yet

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

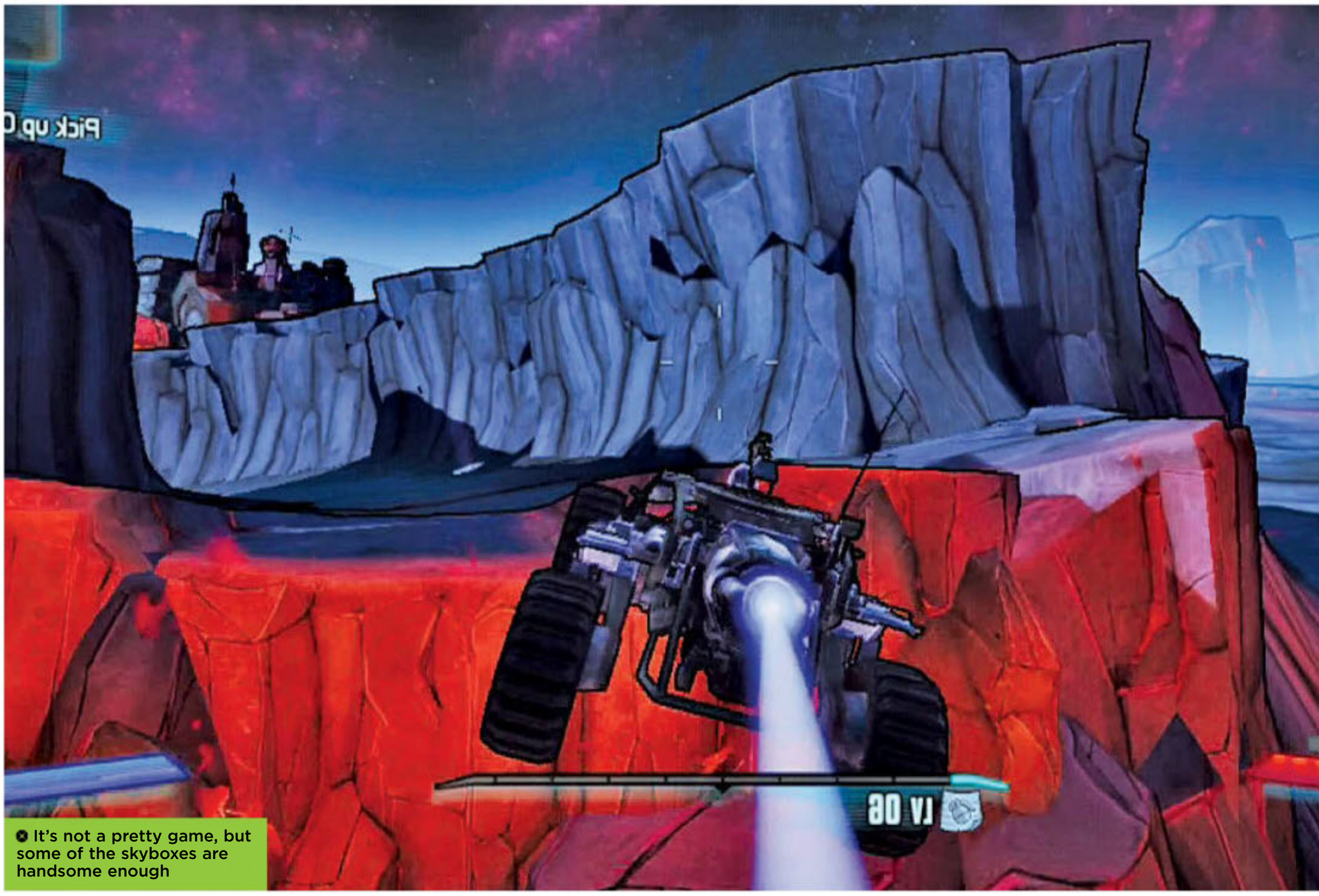
NEED TO UNLOCK
Moxxtails (10G)

IN BRIEF

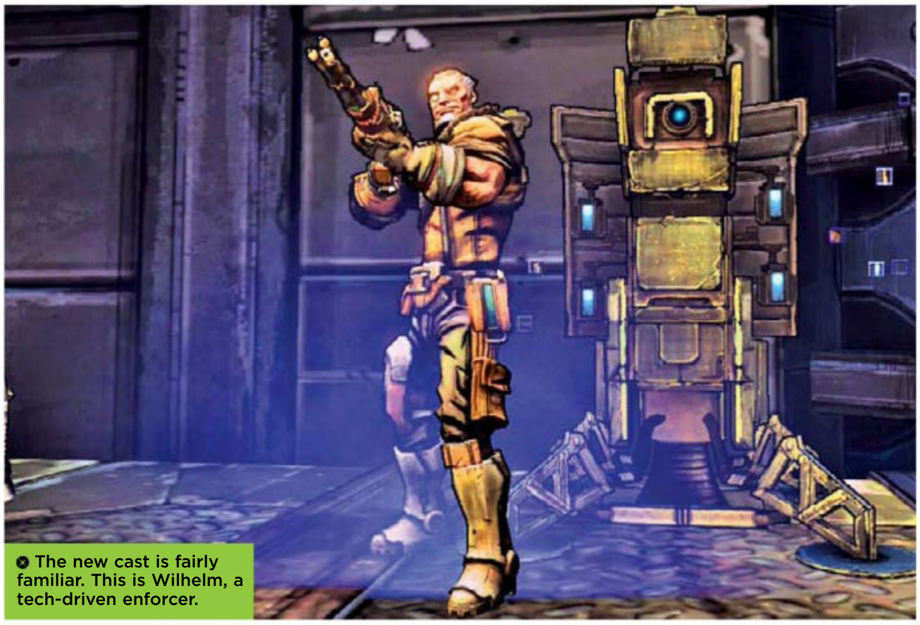
You're a vault hunter, carrying out Handsome Jack's busywork on one of Pandora's moons, Elpis. Everyone is Australian, but it's just the *Borderlands* you've played many hours of in the past.



Bosses are announced with their own special intro, but most just need blasting for ages.



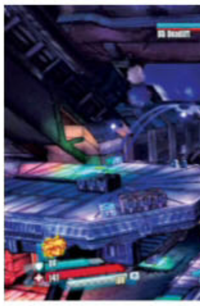
It's not a pretty game, but some of the skyboxes are handsome enough



The new cast is fairly familiar. This is Wilhelm, a tech-driven enforcer.

TRENDING
#MOON BOOSTING

The new low-gravity player movement sets this apart from the pair of previous *Borderlands* games.



Lost Legion Invasion
Find alternate escape route
Follow Jack

BORDERLANDS
THE PRE-SEQUEL!

www.borderlandsthegame.com /borderlandsgame @borderlands

Back for more lunarcy

It's tough work for any game trying to stand out at this time of year, but doubly so for a cooperative loot-based shooter that's only available on old tech. And there just happens to be a little game called *Destiny* grabbing one or two headlines out there at the moment. Credit, though, must go to 2K Australia for trying to set *Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel!* apart from its predecessors. Given the keys to Gearbox' ramshackle dust buggy, the team here has tried to inject *Borderlands* with its own antipodean lilt, making all the enemies, locations and most of the major NPC characters Australian. It's a surprisingly effective bit of scene-setting, and somewhat apt given the series' obvious adulation of all things *Mad Max*.

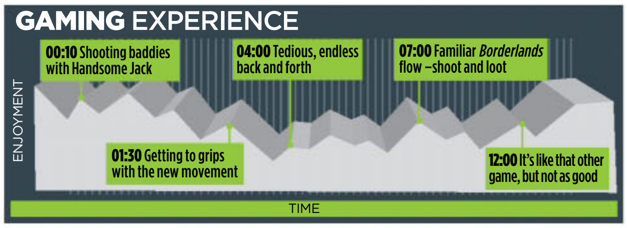
So the first NPC you meet on Elpis, the Pandoran moon, is a sharp-talking Aussie girl who offers a bit more rawness and humour than your average quest-giver, and with areas like Burraburra and enemies called Fair Dinkum, it's fairly obvious that 2K Australia has been allowed to play to its strengths. It's a more appealing aesthetic than the US dustbowl that we're used to, although it looks almost exactly the same. Elpis may focus more on purples and dark blues than Pandora's clay reds or icy whites, but this is still the hard-edged world of *Borderlands* that we've known for quite some time. And it's a look that's starting to age. While some nice skyboxes do good work in distracting you for a period, the low-detail backgrounds, clunky frame-rate and peculiarly tight field of view mean *The Pre-Sequel!* seems positively old from the get-go. Thankfully, 2K Australia's other 'big idea' gives the game just enough identity to not feel like overblown *Borderlands 2* DLC.

> "Regardless of the low-gravity shenanigans at play, Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel! still devolves into a loot-driven grind"

Elpis, much like our own moon, has less gravitational pull than Pandora, meaning your movement is slower and you are lighter. You can jump 15 feet into the air, leap over giant gaps, and generally float about the place like some sort of graphic novel-etched, AK-toting Buzz Aldrin. Elpis is also oxygen-starved, meaning you rely on an 'Oz' kit to keep you breathing. This needs to be constantly topped up by standing on air-replenishing geysers or in terraformed buildings, and occasionally makes the game feel like a swimming level from *Sonic The Hedgehog*.

Systems Jammed
Attach transmitter to second comm tower

GAMING EXPERIENCE



Running out of breath is rarely a problem (although still a strange fun-restriction), and the Oz kit lets you exchange your Oxygen supply for something more fun than breathing anyway. In the middle of a jump, you can boost slightly in any direction, making mid-air adjustments easy. And when you're tired of being airborne, just hit the B button and you'll crash back down to earth with a devastating crash. This is a key element in combat now, and after a few hours you'll get used to seeking out jumppads and launchers, before divebombing groups of enemies.

Of course, anything you can do, so can your foes. As early as your first proper battle on Elpis, enemies will be leaping into the air themselves and trying to crush you with their posteriors. It means *Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel!*'s combat has a markedly different flow from what series players are used to. Change is always interesting, and while 2K Australia should be commended for not rigidly sticking to the template, but it's a decision that's not entirely successful. The constant assault from all angles combined with the gloopy, slow-motion movement can actually be quite nauseating at times. And when compared to *Destiny*, it's just not in the same league.

Ultimately, regardless of the low-gravity shenanigans at play, *Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel!* still devolves into a loot-driven grind, and offers little in the way of essential upgrades to its already popular template. The story is also hampered by endless busy work. Almost every mission involves going somewhere, being told it doesn't work, going somewhere else to find the thing you need to fix it, then going back, then going somewhere else again… it's glacially paced at times. When those jobs involve little to no combat, too, you do wonder exactly what the hell you're playing the game for.

There is a base level of enjoyment to be had, which can be multiplied by every co-op buddy you manage to rope into playing with you, but unless you're obsessed with seeing how that level 12 Hyperion shotty is better than your Dahl level 11, it's not going to do a great deal for you. If there hadn't already been such a high-profile loot shooter this year, then *Borderlands The Pre-Sequel!* would do a better job in scratching that itch. While it will prove serviceable to true *Borderlands* nuts, it's not worth going to the moon and back for.

JON DENTON

VERDICT

Even with its low-gravity exploits, it's leagues behind the other loot shooter out this year. *Borderlands 3* will likely shake things up in ways this could never manage.

6

XBOX ONE

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Microsoft Studios

DEVELOPER
Team Dakota, SkyBox Labs

GAME TYPE
UGC-fuelled adventure

PLAYERS
1-4

DLC
Multiple premium content packs containing creation tools and themes

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

NEED TO UNLOCK
Catalyst (10G)

IN BRIEF

Play and create your way around *Project Spark*'s sandbox universe. Download a variety of user-generated levels or the developer-created campaign, then attempt to build your own levels from scratch or remix an existing one.

PROJECT SPARK

www.ProjectSpark.com /JoinProjectSpark @Proj_Spark

Inspiration comes at a cost

Do you fancy yourself as a player of games, a creator of worlds or a bit of both? Invariably, the answer to this question will determine how much you're going to derive from *Project Spark*, Microsoft Studios and Team Dakota's UGC-fuelled sandbox, but not in the way that you might expect. Despite the title's primary allure being the promise of empowerment and the opportunity to create, the most obvious place to start is with Play mode. Here, you can begin to explore the core mechanics and get a taste for how worlds are built before diving into Create mode yourself. Those coming to this by way of the free to play download have access to a raft of user-generated experiments, while those that opt for the Starter Pack also have episode one of Team Dakota's Champions Quest to jump into.

Champions Quest serves as *Project Spark*'s primary Play experience and one of the few cohesive game world's amidst a raft of bite-sized novelty projects. Sadly, its whimsical adventure and gentle introduction to wider creation tools and build logic are undermined by a host of technical shortcomings. Poor camera work, some horrendous slow-down and a lack of direction on how best to complete challenges to earn the currency required to access new content packs get *Project Spark* off to an uninspiring start.

Should you play through the couple of hours required to complete Champions Quest, you'll have earned yourself several thousand credits with which to unlock content to bolster your creation tools. However, with even the basic items of individual level furniture costing upwards of 500 credits each, you shouldn't expect to earn anything spectacular too soon. Purchasing the Spark Premium membership – one month of which comes included in the Starter Pack – doubles the rate at which you earn Creation Credits but this membership is most readily available in exchange for Tokens purchased with real cash, making each month of Spark Premium membership equate to around £8. However, even when earning 200% of credits available, there's still an extraordinary level of dedication required to earn enough to buy any one of the top content packs, making the economy system too miserly to be constructive.

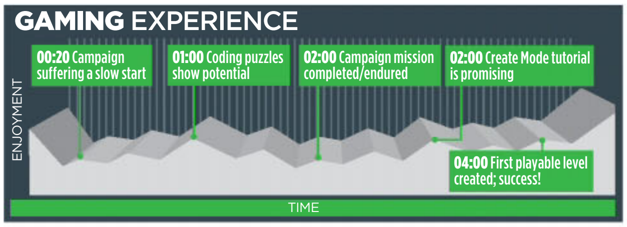
The good news is that Create mode is single-handedly keeping *Project Spark* afloat, right now. With a decent number of starting tools and a reasonably sound tutorial, you can get building without too much fuss and experience an incredibly detailed set of systems, you can also choose to create in local co-op mode to help speed things along. Each build tool has two opposite functions controlled by the left and right triggers, so while you expand landscape with one squeeze you can erode it with another, allowing the creation of an inhabitable environment in a relatively short space of time. The area affected by the changes you command is determined by a 3D cursor of a size and shape of your choosing, while object behaviour is controlled by an intuitive system of switch commands. It's here that you feel like you're genuinely coding behaviour and breathing life into your world. By jumping into your creation using the test system to discover what works and what requires further tinkering and then, finally, you start to unearth some of the initial buzz of excitement that *Project Spark* has been promising.

> "The good news is that Create mode is single-handedly keeping Project Spark afloat, right now"

Recognising that starting from scratch might be intimidating for many, Team Dakota has also included two additional build options. The first is the ability play a Crossroads game, in which a few basic landscape choices put you on the path of creating a playable third-person adventure. The second option is to remix existing levels by using them as a template and adjusting various parameters, character behaviour or even just landscape aesthetic. Both serve as useful educational experiences but both also come with various characteristics that have a tell-tale currency signs attached to them, which lets you know that at least one purchase will be required for you to fully participate. This frequent occurrence of negative reinforcement consistently frustrates, leaving you with the dull feeling of inferiority for not having the necessary content packs rather than revelling in a celebration of the tools that you do have. It's a cheap ploy and one that ultimately damages *Project Spark*'s appeal.

As *Project Spark* stands right now, it's far better to be a creator than a player for while the former boasts elements of empowerment, the latter is a largely a dissatisfying collection of novelty experiences and me-too clones. Create mode is also being held back, though, due to a punitive economy system that dishes out too little reward for even daily play. What's left is a project with strong potential being undermined by the majority of its component parts and an occasionally obtuse UI with uncomfortably small text.

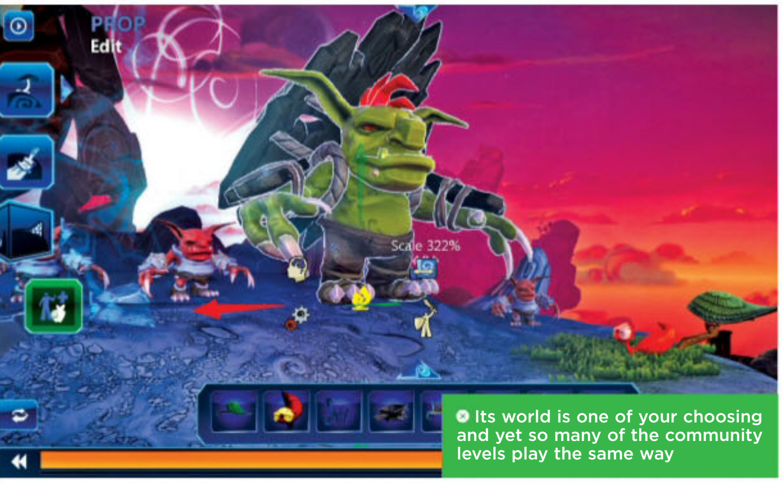
STACE HARMAN


GAMING EXPERIENCE
00:20 Campaign suffering a slow start
01:00 Coding puzzles show potential
02:00 Campaign mission completed/endured
02:00 Create Mode tutorial is promising
04:00 First playable level created; success!
ENJOYMENT
TIME

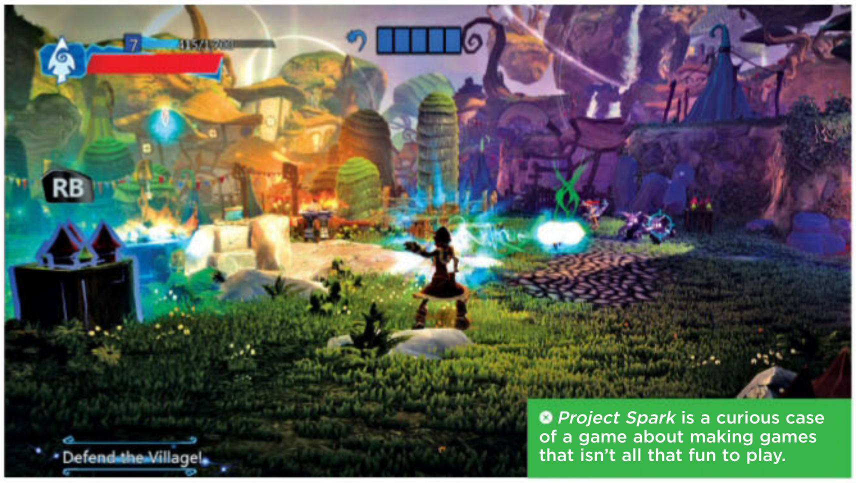
VERDICT

Project Spark's good intentions are undermined by mechanical and economic shortcomings. In time, a community could thrive but it's off to a faltering start.

5



Its world is one of your choosing and yet so many of the community levels play the same way



Project Spark is a curious case of a game about making games that isn't all that fun to play.

Goblins are a staple enemy but can be given surprisingly complex behaviour thanks to the Brain Editor.

TRENDING

#NEARLY THERE

A title for those that want to create, rather than play, but even that is being hamstrung by its economy.

Two of four heroes are available from the off, selecting the other two takes you to the marketplace, which is nice.

If you build it they will come... but don't release it too soon else you'll get down voted into oblivion.

XBOX ONE

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
Beenox (Xbox One) Toys for Bob (Xbox 360)

GAME TYPE
Action-adventure

PLAYERS
1-4 (online or local)

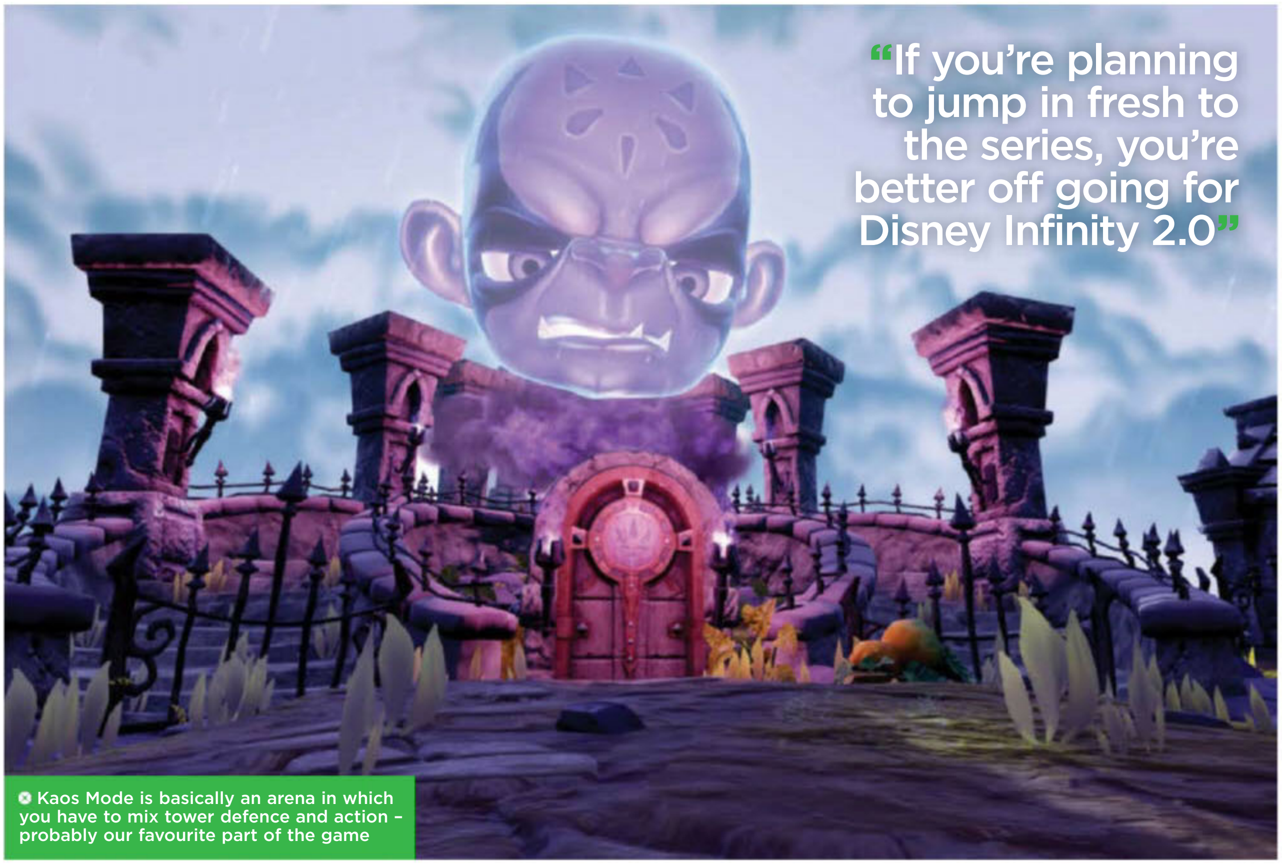
DLC
N/A

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Easy

NEED TO UNLOCK
Arena Mogul (10G)

IN BRIEF

The fourth instalment of the *Skylanders* story sees new and returning heroes take on long-term villain Kaos, who's up to his old cartoonish villainy across new parts of the floating *Skylanders* continent.



> "If you're planning to jump in fresh to the series, you're better off going for Disney Infinity 2.0"

Kaos Mode is basically an arena in which you have to mix tower defence and action – probably our favourite part of the game

SKYLANDERS TRAP TEAM

www.skylanders.com /SkylandersGame @SkylandersGame

Who needs friends when you've got enemies?

Skylanders remains the solid experience it always has been. Like *Diablo* for kids, it's a game that takes the simple pleasures in hacking and slashing and boils them down to their component parts, throwing in a few RPG-lite elements to pad out the experience for anyone after more than a cartoon *Dynasty Warriors* experience.

The extensive cast of toys introduced in previous games can be used with *Trap Team*, but the newest *Skylanders* adventure requires new hardware in the form of a Traptanium Portal (which you can only buy packaged with the game). This introduces *another* new money-making avenue for Activision in the form of traps – each can hold only one villain, and if you find yourself without the right elemental trap, the game outright prevents you from accessing its content.

Where previous *Skylanders* games always had artificial paywalls erected in-game, they only ever locked off optional content – small missions and rewards. *Trap Team* takes it one step further, and denies you access to half of the series' new features unless you go and buy the (tacky) traps to store them in. The other new feature in *Trap Team* is an arena mode, which is perfect for the co-op gameplay. The story missions are fun, and the level design remains as colourful and simply satisfying as it always has done, but it's in the arenas that (with their slipshod tower defence elements) *Trap Team* shines.

Also, the new figures the game ships with are as well made as you'd expect from Toys For Bob, and their in-game counterparts are animated superbly, with the shiny, plasticky graphics rendered beautifully on the Xbox One. The sound design is – loathe as we are to say it – *charming*; pick up the inventively named Sheep Creep, for example, and his bleating will carry from the game to the new portal's in-built speaker. It's a fun novelty, but one that wears thin when you've got the barrel-scrape of a villain 'Broccoli Guy' making wise-cracks at you every time you land an attack…

If you already own the past *Skylanders* games (and lets be honest, Activision's franchising would assume that you *do*) then you'll get good mileage out of *Trap Team* – your old figures will fight against the cynicism presented by the new trapping mechanic. If you're planning on jumping in fresh to the series, though, you're probably better off going for *Disney Infinity 2.0*; at least Disney Interactive is upfront about its merchandising.

DOM PEPPIATT

VERDICT

Another solid entry for *Skylanders*, but the upfront price is only a fraction of what you'll need to pay to see all it has to offer.

5

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XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE
THE EVIL WITHIN
18

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Bethesda Softworks

DEVELOPER
Tango Gameworks

GAME TYPE
Survival horror

PLAYERS
1

DLC
Season pass: three add-on packs featuring extra missions

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Hard

NEED TO UNLOCK
It Is What It Is (60G) – finish the game without upgrading any skills with green gel

IN BRIEF

Troubled detective Sebastian Castellanos is investigating a gruesome mass murder at Beacon Mental Hospital. However, an encounter with a mysterious hooded foe sends Castellanos spiralling into a world of horror, where nothing is quite what it seems…

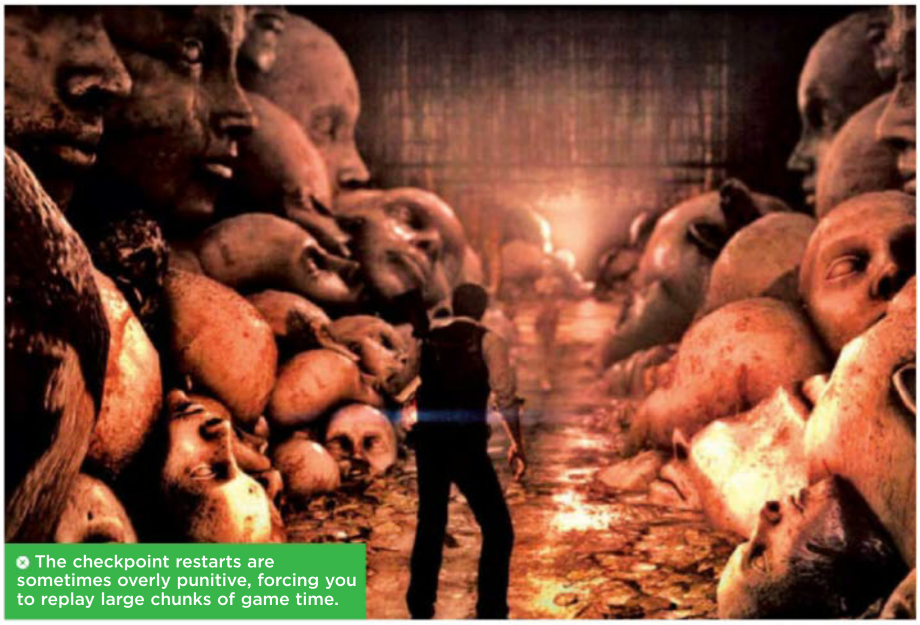
ALSO ON

XBOX 360

There's not much difference in the visual parity here, given they're 'meh' all-round.

Running and hiding is definitely an option here, and one that should be routinely encouraged.

The 2.35:1 aspect ratio is a strange choice – it's certainly cinematic, but you can often feel boxed in. Perhaps that's the point…



The checkpoint restarts are sometimes overly punitive, forcing you to replay large chunks of game time.

TRENDING

#JUSTLIKE RESI4

Let's play a game of survival horror bingo – how many similarities with *Resident Evil 4* can you spot? We've got robed monks, chainsaw death animations, murderous backwater villages…

THE EVIL WITHIN

www.theevilwithin.com /EvilWithingame @TheEvilWithin

Shinji Mikami returns to the genre he defined

It's unlikely he knew it at the time, but nine years ago Shinji Mikami was working hard on a game that was to set the standard for all third-person shooters to come. It was of course *Resident Evil 4,* and even today very few games have matched its pitch-perfect approach to over-the-shoulder shooting. *Resident Evil 5* and *6* were mere imitations, and *Dead Space*'s promise has quickly faded in a misguided grab for mass appeal. Who better, then, to come back and show us how it's done? Almost a decade on from *Resident Evil 4* Mikami is back on form with what is, for all intents and purposes, an homage to his greatest work.

Make no mistake – the memory of *Resident Evil 4* pervades every aspect of *The Evil Within*. There are crazed torch-wielding villagers that are Ganados in all but name. There are huge ogres that swing hefty clubs and lumbering psychotics that lunge with rusty chainsaws. There are small ramshackle villages and mountaintop fortresses. And there are the erupting, blood-splattering headshots: as rewarding today as they were back in 2005.

What's really interesting, however, is that *Resident Evil* isn't the only successful horror franchise that *The Evil Within* recalls. The setting here is a dark and dank underworld, where amputated torsos fester on butcher's blocks and blood-encrusted paint peels off walls. It's an environment more reminiscent of *Silent Hill* than it is Raccoon City. So too are the mind games that plague front man Sebastian Castellanos: rooms warp and morph, walls become floors, hospital corridors shift and turn into moonlit forest passages. Is Sebastian's world real? Is it a delusion brought on by past trauma? Much like *Silent Hill*, *The Evil Within* is a game that's as much about horror of the mind as it is of the body.

When it comes to straight up combat, though, this is *Resi 4* through and through. Before any upgrades have been unlocked, the wavering reticule means those balloon-bursting headshots don't come easy. There's less outright mob management here than there was in *Resi 4*, but the creatures here – wretched zombies entangled in wire and pierced through with metal barbs – still come at you with enough speed and conviction to make grace under pressure a challenging necessity.

Encounters are deadly, requiring constant movement, precision and creativity if you're to come out on top. Furthermore, *The Evil Within* is not generous with ammunition, so careful resource management is key. Various tricks and traps can be used against your enemy in order to come out on top. Some areas have switches that drop deadly spikes from the ceiling, while tripwires and bear traps can be dismantled for parts that are used to construct bolts for your multi-purpose bow. Coming in explosive, electrical, ice and flashbang forms, these bolts can be fired into floors or walls to act as proximity-activated mines. There's also the drop-and-burn system, which allows crafty players to instantly burn knocked-down enemies to death using a limited supply of matches. Used tactically, this approach can potentially take out multiple floored enemies without having to use up your precious stock of ammunition.

While you're mostly fighting the lumbering Ganados… sorry, *Haunted*… there are other, stronger enemies that occasionally block your path. Some are completely invisible, requiring you to closely monitor objects and puddles in the environment to track their location. Then there are bosses like a tangle of lank black hair and limbs that's seemingly just crawled out from a Japanese horror movie. There's also a muscle-bound butcher with a large metal locker for a skull – nicknamed Boxhead, as if the other *Silent Hill* similarities weren't quite sufficient.

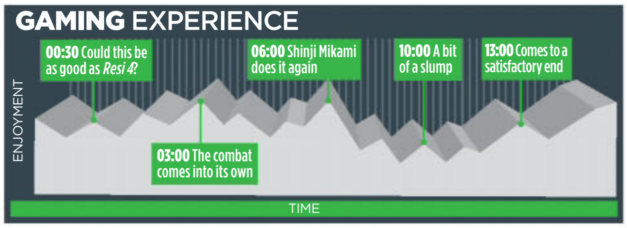
> "The Evil Within is less genre-defining and is instead more of a spiritual successor – one that relives past glories rather than seeks out new ones"

The action is exhilarating and brilliant, and incredibly tense. Thankfully there is some respite from the horror. The soothing melody of Clair de Lune quickly becomes a welcome signifier that you're near a safe house of sorts. Looking into a mirror in these areas transports you to a mental hospital ward where you can save your game or undergo electro-shock therapy to upgrade your various abilities. A green liquid is your currency here, which is found by endlessly rifling through draws and smashing open crates. It can be used to augment weapon abilities, the amount of stock you can carry, health and more. It's a simple but rewarding system, and the upgrade effects are tangible in game. However, it's a great pity that the RPG mechanics don't extend to ideas like the mini-game/storage system of *Resi 4*'s attaché case.

Still, small niggles like this aside, the spirit of *Resident Evil 4* is alive and well in *The Evil Within*, and it's a comparison that Mikami has little interest in shying away from. That's one hell of an act to live up to, though, and it shouldn't come as much of a surprise *The Evil Within* doesn't quite manage it. There are momentary flashes of the considered, rhythmic, always-on-the-back-foot gameplay of Mikami's masterpiece, but they're nestled deeper in a game that sometimes sags and runs out of creative juice.

The Evil Within is less genre-defining and is instead more of a spiritual successor – one that relives past glories rather than seeks out new ones. When those past glories are of such a high calibre as this, however, that's no bad thing. There are times when *The Evil Within* echoes the brilliance of its inspiration, and even though it's usually only for the briefest of moments, that's enough to elevate the experience above its small and tolerable faults.

CHRIS MCMAHON



GAMING EXPERIENCE

VERDICT

It doesn't match up to the brilliance of the game from which it takes its cues, but *The Evil Within* is nevertheless a taut, action-packed shooter.

8

The enemies just keep. on. coming. Your trigger-finger will HURT after not very long at all.

SHADOW WARRIOR

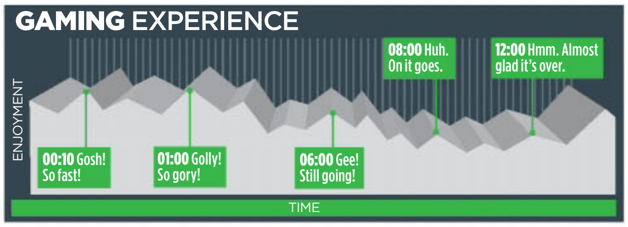
www.shadowwarrior.com /ShadowWarriorGame @ShadowWarrior

Suddenly, the po-faced shooters began to cower

The past is back, in some kind of present-pastification experiment gone rather right. Except that wouldn't be a good title for a game, so instead it's been called *Shadow Warrior* – which is odd, because there was an FPS of similar theme back in the clouded past of 1997… almost as if this is a reimagining of that brilliant PC original. Epiphany! For that's exactly what it is. And rather than being a silly modern FPS with silly modern FPS constraints, like 'following the man' and 'shooting the man that the man is telling you to shoot' and 'following the man again', *Shadow Warrior* instead puts its eggs firmly (though not so firmly as to break them) into the basket of 'being quick and letting you slice everyone/thing up with a sword'. Which, to be perfectly honest, is a breath of fresh air.

Not only is *Shadow Warrior* quick and bloody (surprisingly so, and this coming from an editorial 'we' that has played some *bloody* games over the years), it also harks back to the lost past of the FPS in other ways. While by no means open world in its setup, it is a game of some exploration – you might even, whisper it, *get lost*. How mad is that? Not just following a basic, straightforward A to B path, but having to look around, maybe double-back on yourself and stumble across the odd secret here and there. How delightfully quaint!

GAMING EXPERIENCE



And while you're cooing at the secret area you've just stumbled on – brilliantly complete with 1997-alike textures from the original game – you're also being set on by, seemingly, every single enemy that has ever existed in anything ever. While at numerous points you'll be chopping up your traditional bad buggers, most of the game sees you battling crafty demonspawn as they… well, *spawn* everywhere. And we do mean everywhere, because these blighters don't stop coming… well, not for a bit at least.

It does begin to wear thin after a while – more on that in a minute – but for a good, solid amount of time it's great fun to chop down the waves of satanic scum. Sure, you can use a gun if you want, but the sword is where it's at. And while you're chopping and slicing you'll be picking up a score too – just like, say, *Bulletstorm*, *Shadow Warrior* is a game that rewards you for mixing up your kill styles, comboing your death-dealing and generally mixing up your aggressive bereavement policy.

Points, in that wonderfully old school way, mean prizes. Or upgrades, if you're being pedantic. In fact, if you're being pedantic you'd call the upgrades what they're actually called, but that's a step too far for us. Basically, you get better bits for your guns (and sword), as well as more health and stamina, the usual crap you'd expect and – obviously – magical powers. The power to self-heal, or spin around with your sword, or conjure a shield around you – all done with a fiddly input on the analogue stick that often doesn't register. Which is doubly annoying when you consider just how fast and relentless the action gets in *Shadow Warrior*.

But yes – magic! For you see, *Shadow Warrior* is a game of Eastern mysticism and fortune cookies. Literally that. It is a game with a sense of humour, even if it's a sense of humour that's pretty rubbish. It is a game that does not take itself seriously at

XBOX ONE

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Devolver Digital

DEVELOPER
Flying Wild Hog

GAME TYPE
First-person shooter

PLAYERS
1

DLC
N/A

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Easy

NEED TO UNLOCK
Cookie Monster (30G)

IN BRIEF

You are Lo Wang – yes, really – tasked with hunting down the three parts of a mystical, demon-slaying katana: the Nobitsura Kage. It's hokey, but intentionally so – and thoroughly tongue in cheek throughout.

TRENDING

#OLD SCHOOL COOL

It's not a perfect recreation of 1997's shooters, but *Shadow Warrior* reminds us brilliantly of a time when things were much faster.

Most of the bad bastards you'll face will be demon-spawn, so you shouldn't feel bad for eviscerating them.

> "Shadow Warrior never actually stops being a good laugh – even if it isn't funny"

This chap seems extraordinarily happy about the fact he's just about to get his face shot off. Weirdo.

all... well, apart from maybe in some of the longer cutscenes, but you can just ignore those. They really don't matter at all. Sorry, writers! But even if it *isn't* funny, and even if the story *isn't* worth paying attention to, this lighthearted tone is more than welcome. Thor knows we need something other than endless militaristic jargon in our lives.

It might come as a bit of a surprise that *Shadow Warrior* is pretty much a full price game, minus a tenner or so. It's not that you don't get enough from it, it's just that it feels... well, 'budget' is a very harsh word to use – it certainly doesn't feel cheap. But it felt like playing through a £15 Xbox Live release. That's a weird criticism and one that may not apply to you, but it's a feeling we had worth pointing out. And, to be fair, you get a solid 12 hours out of the thing.

There's very little actually *wrong* with *Shadow Warrior* – it does everything it sets out to do and it does it well. It's just the whole thing starts to wear a little thin after you've played through two thirds of the game. By that point it's still fun, it's just a bit of a chore at the same time. And your right index finger will *hurt* thanks to the constant sword-slashing.

Still, *Shadow Warrior* never actually stops being a good laugh – even if it isn't funny, as mentioned – and is a nice little reminder of the time before *Call of Duty* and *Battlefield* nuked the colour and joy out of our shooters. A good distraction and a fun curio, but probably not the dawning of a new (old) era.

IAN DRANSFIELD

VERDICT

While *Shadow Warrior* doesn't manage to keep you hooked for the full 12 or so hours, you'll probably leave it with fond memories.

7

While this is a shooter at heart, you'll be using your sword more than anything else. Because it's fun.

XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE
LIMITED EDITION
LORDS OF THE FALLEN
16

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Square Enix

DEVELOPER
Deck13 Interactive, CI Games

GAME TYPE
From Software Obsessive

PLAYERS
1

DLC
No

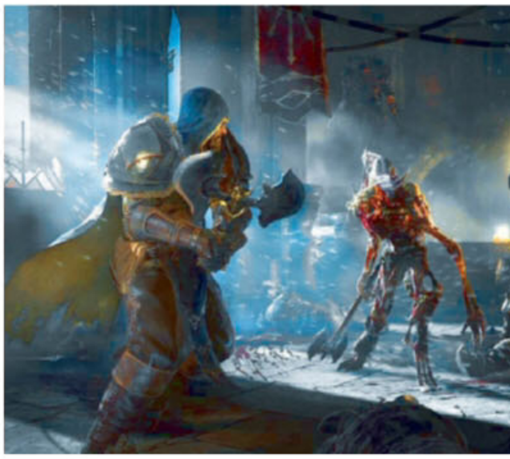
ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

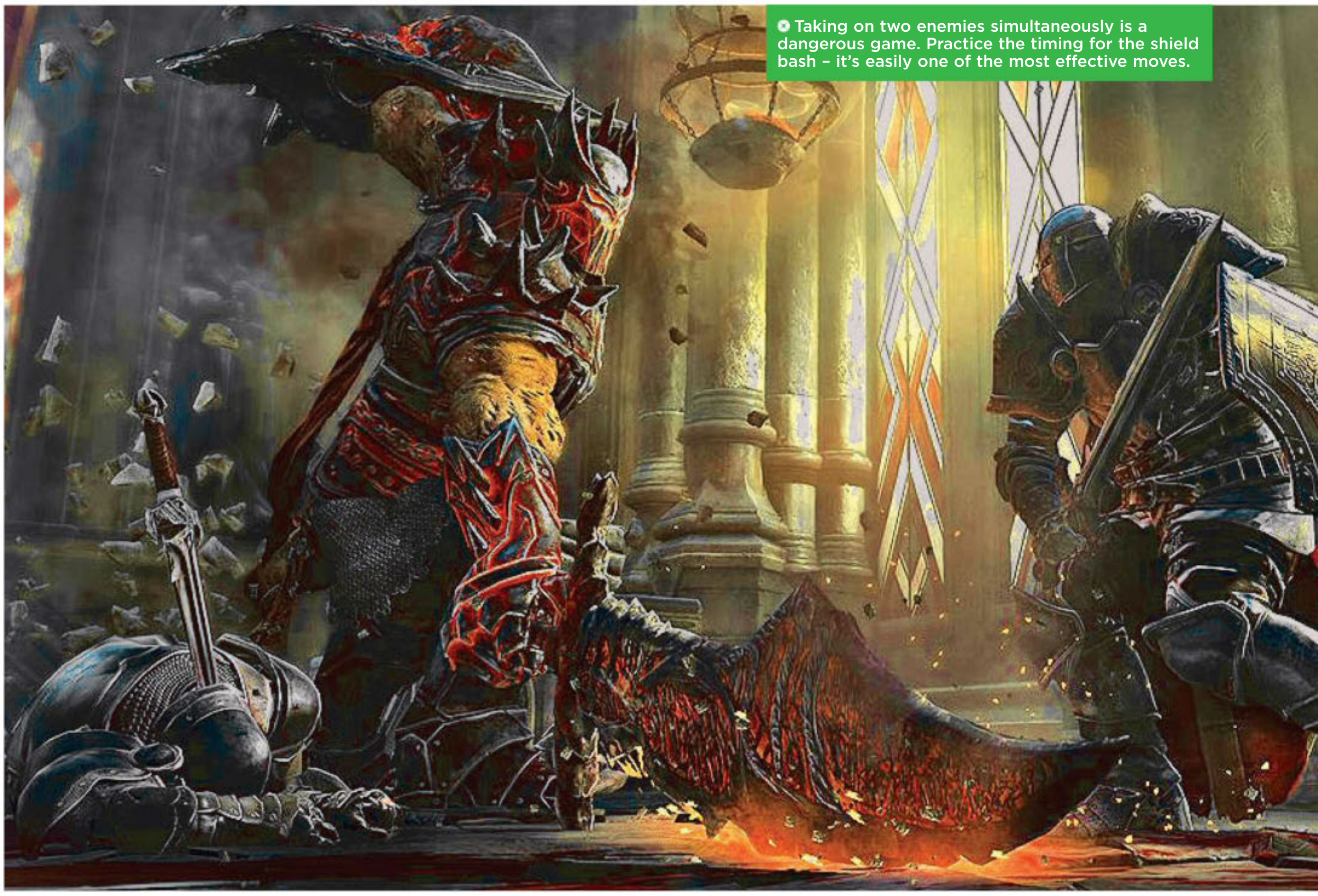
NEED TO UNLOCK
This! Is! Keystone! (15G) – Kick an enemy to his death

IN BRIEF

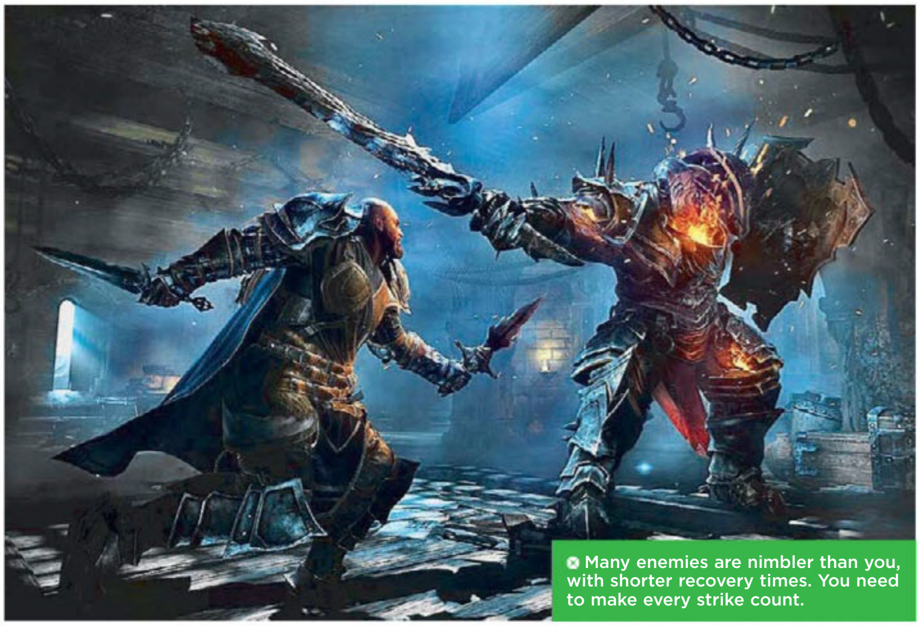
Tattooed criminal Harkyn is freed from his cell for a redemptive mission to defeat an invading army of gods and visit a demonic realm to finish them off, too. Much hacking, slashing and potion-quaffing ensues.

Dual-wielding daggers gives you extra attack and movement speed, but without defensive protection you'll need to avoid being hit.





Taking on two enemies simultaneously is a dangerous game. Practice the timing for the shield bash – it's easily one of the most effective moves.

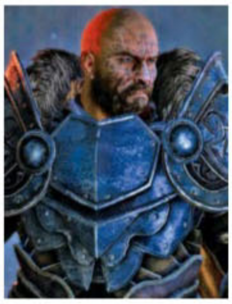


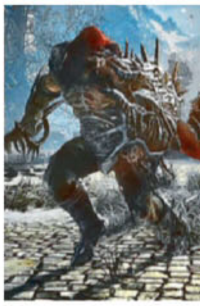
Many enemies are nimbler than you, with shorter recovery times. You need to make every strike count.

TRENDING

#DLCDONE RIGHT

We frown upon day one DLC, but cheap add-ons that give you an early boost without unbalancing the game aren't such a bad idea.





Stealth is occasionally encouraged, but rarely seems to be a valid option – enemies always hear you coming.

LORDS OF THE FALLEN

www.lordsofthefallen.com /lotfgame @lotfgame

Not enough soul

There's no escaping *Lords Of The Fallen*'s main influence. This isn't a game that wants to be like *Dark Souls*, it wants to be *Dark Souls*, borrowing everything from its grimdark tone, its control scheme, and the weight of its combat to the way heavy armour inhibits your movement and the speed of your dodge-roll. It's 'inspired by' *Dark Souls* in so much as it cribs almost all of the basic principles of that series and repurposes them in a fresh new-gen setting..

That in itself isn't necessarily a bad thing, even if it means *Lords Of The Fallen* struggles to establish an identity of its own. It's not trying to hide its inspirations, instead unabashedly wearing them on its sleeve. Plenty of games will inevitably pinch ideas from Hidetaka Miyazaki's modern classic; this just happens to be the first major release to do so. In fact, *Lords Of The Fallen* frequently demonstrates that its developer was paying close attention to the reasons From Software's RPG works. There's a real heft to the weapons you wield, and you'll need to account for that when you begin your swing. Consider not just the distance between you and your opponent, but your stamina meter. You'll be constantly thinking about the gear you have equipped; whether it's giving you enough manoeuvrability, and whether the trade-off in defence is worth shedding that heavy helmet for. Before long you'll have more weapons and armour than you know what to do with, encouraging you to experiment with loadouts.

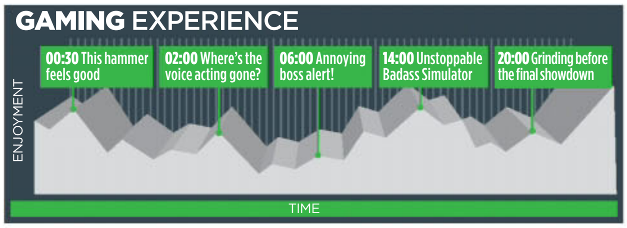
Then there's the environment: a giant fortress with a labyrinthine network of corridors below ground, which is matched in complexity by its alternate-dimension counterpart. You're given objectives but never told where to go, which can occasionally mean some aimless meandering, but usually you'll find some decent loot on your travels, and there are several shortcuts to open up that allow you to get around quicker, too. It's annoying when the item you need is behind a tiny door you walked past five times because you didn't rotate the camera at just the right moment to spot it, but it helps generate a strong sense of place.

It has some smart ideas of its own, too. You can bank the experience you've earned at save points to invest in magic or stat upgrades, though the longer you leave it, the better the rewards you'll get: your experience will multiply for each enemy you kill before triggering the save point, and you'll get higher quality loot drops, too. It's a neat risk-reward system that essentially acts as a difficulty modifier. If you're good, you can level up quickly, and if you perish you've still got an opportunity to retrieve your experience by returning to the point at which you died to pick it up again. Though you'll need to hurry back, as a timer is ticking down all the while...

You're also given a magic gauntlet, which can be used as a projectile weapon, or for close-range explosive blasts, and which runs off the same magical energy with which you can cast spells. The selection you get depends on your chosen class: Cleric magic focuses on healing yourself and debilitating enemies, while Warrior magic is naturally more offensive. Rogues get some of the most interesting ones, which compensates a little for their weaknesses elsewhere, including a supernatural assassin that can stab enemies on your behalf and a spectral doppelganger who'll copy your moves, dealing double damage if you get your timing right.

> "Plenty of games will pinch ideas from Hidetaka Miyazaki's modern classic; this just happens to be the first"

GAMING EXPERIENCE



On too many occasions, however, it falls apart. We'll forgive the excess of lens flare (seriously, even JJ Abrams would tone it down a bit) because the lighting is beautiful, and it factors neatly into visibility in outdoor areas. Yet it's clearly having an impact on performance: the frame-rate tanks horribly in places, notably during one boss fight where the arrival of his minions briefly turned the game into an exceptionally pretty flipbook animation. Such dips begin to factor into the combat, making heavy weapons even less responsive, and with inputs sporadically failing to register, you'll never be able to shake that sensation that your most recent death wasn't entirely your fault: a crucial difference. The camera struggles at times, too, particularly when roaming through narrow passageways.

Moreover, the game's difficulty curve feels erratic. This can be partially attributed to its non-linear approach, meaning you can, for example, tackle the third boss before you've even seen the second. And yet elsewhere, the challenge ranges from laughably easy to artificially difficult. The abundance of shielded enemies with small hitboxes make for slow early progress, though once you've levelled up your gauntlet enough, you can simply take them out with projectile attacks before they've even reached you. Blitzing enemies that previously caused you grief is fun, but certain setups are distinctly unbalanced.

Throw in a feeble story and a handful of minor glitches and you've got a game that retains enough of its inspiration to keep you playing, but which asks you to forgive an awful lot of problems to truly enjoy.

CHRIS SCHILLING

VERDICT

Despite some fine ideas and lovely graphics, *Lords Of The Fallen* is a frustratingly uneven action-RPG that pilfers liberally from the *Dark Souls* handbook.

6

XBOX 360

XBOX 360
F1 2014
Formula 1
3

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Codemasters

DEVELOPER
Codemasters Birmingham

GAME TYPE
Simulation racer

PLAYERS
1-2 (2-16 online)

DLC
N/A

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

NEED TO UNLOCK
Zero to Hero (15G) In Career, qualify last, but finish first.

IN BRIEF

Latest of Codemasters' annual F1 instalments and the final one to appear on 'last-gen' consoles. As of *F1 2015* the series will be available on Xbox One.

NFINITI
Santander
14

"The primary feeling promoted by F1 2014 is one of déjà vu"

If you're thinking about buying this then you're probably a racing game fan… do yourself a favour and turn the assists off.

F1 2014

www.formula1-game.com /formula1game @Formula1game

Brand new cars, outdated systems

Playing on the generic 'medium' difficulty, *F1 2014* is an exercise in mundanity. Opponents are barely interested in racing, giving you so much space and respect that it feels as though you've an invisible force field around you at all times. Your own car's performance is so functional, so wholly unable to go wrong, that it feels as though you're stuck on rails. Even the lap times of the opposition during qualifying are terrible, nowhere near the levels of a professional driver.

Ramp up the difficulty, making sure to remove the bulk of driving assists, and the story is different. Mimicking reality, this year's cars are powered by the turbocharged engines that have caused so much controversy among *F1*'s hipster fan base regarding the 'non-traditional' noise they make. Whether you like the noise or not, with the assists off you've got no choice but to respect the new engines.

The penchant the rear end has for sliding out during a corner means anything less than perfectly timed, respectful bursts of the throttle are punished with a trip to the barrier, ending your race if you're playing 'properly' and have activated full damage. This twitchiness also means you've got to be more aware of your racing line, with smooth, Jensen Button-esque, driving being the order of the day.

Adhering to a graceful route around the track makes overtaking more difficult as you're often having to position your car awkwardly to make use of what little space your rival has left you. Essentially, there's a learning curve that offers some satisfaction. Despite such joys, the primary feeling promoted by *F1 2014* is one of déjà vu. Anyone familiar with the series will find little in the way of upgrades and additions to get excited about and it's clear that Codemasters has already turned its attention to next year's Xbox One instalment.

New tracks have been added that mirror this season's line-up, and relevant changes have been made to each team's driver pairings, but there's almost nothing by way of new features to get excited about. Tweaked handling and car physics just aren't enough.

The pick-up-and-play 'scenario' challenges are more abundant, but they're not enough to generate long-term appeal, while modifications to career mode are primarily obsessed with allowing you to make a season shorter. It's ultimately underwhelming, although Codemasters' continued support of split-screen is a welcome sight. *F1 2014* is a decent enough game for newcomers to the series, but for veterans it just doesn't give you enough to chew on.

JOHN ROBERTSON

VERDICT

A lack of new features means there's little intrigue here. Recommended for series newcomers and/or F1 fanatics that simply can't help themselves only.

6

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XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE
nickelodeon
THE LEGEND OF KORRA
T
ACTIVISION

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
Platinum Games

GAME TYPE
Tedious brawler

PLAYERS
1

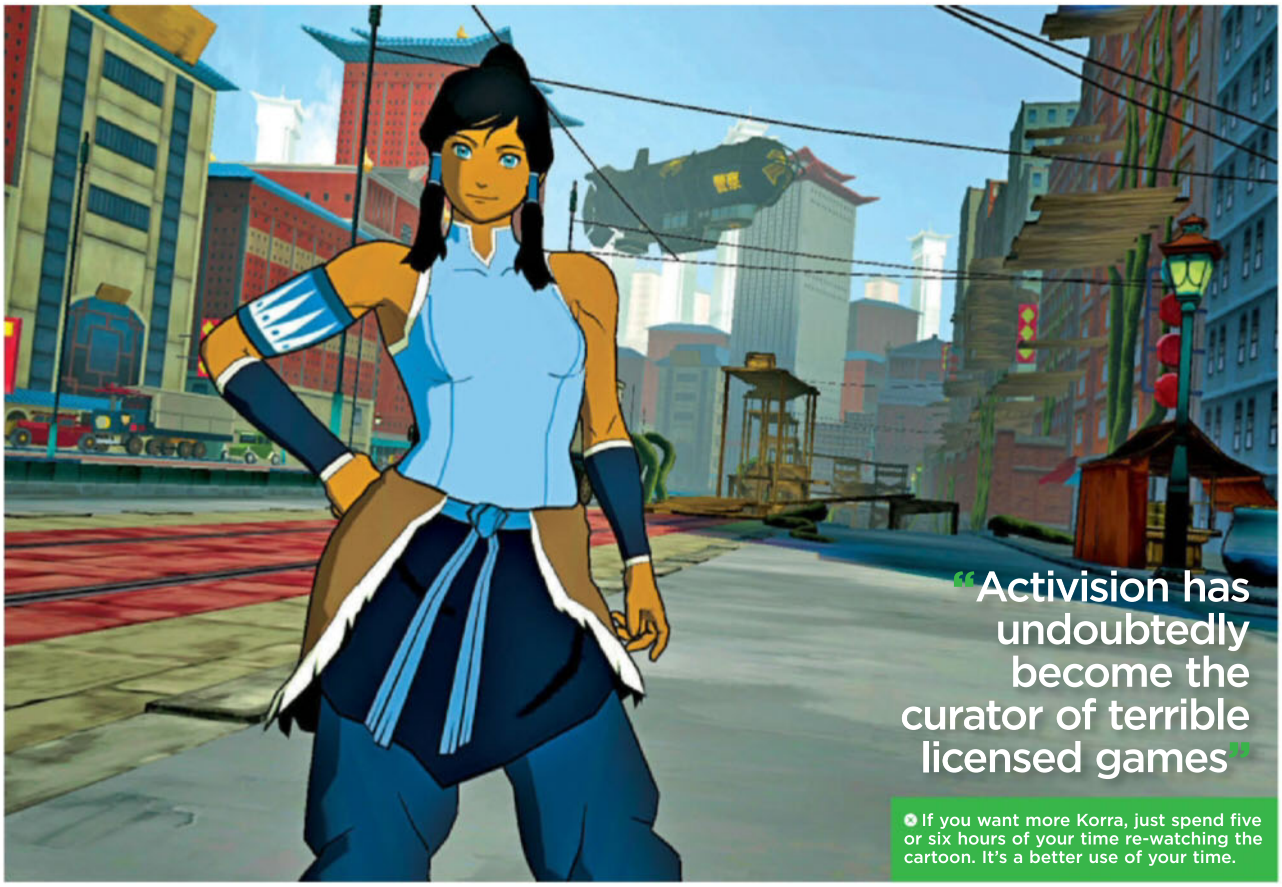
DLC
No

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Easy

NEED TO UNLOCK
Full-Baked Avatar (30G)

IN BRIEF

Bayonetta developer Platinum Games takes on the Nickelodeon's popular *Avatar: The Last Airbender's* spin-off *The Legend Of Korra* and turns it into a brawler devoid of personality.



> "Activision has undoubtedly become the curator of terrible licensed games"

If you want more Korra, just spend five or six hours of your time re-watching the cartoon. It's a better use of your time.

THE LEGEND OF KORRA

platinumgames.com/games/the-legend-of-korra /PlatinumGames @PlatinumGames

Bending our patience until it snaps

The Legend Of Korra is a shallow, poorly designed and routinely tedious brawler that – even in its best moments – fails to deliver a reason to justify its existence. It's the worst kind of licensed title: offering just enough fan-service to not entirely insult the cartoon it takes its name from, but is so lacklustre in nearly every respect that it'll test the patience of even the most devout followers of *Avatar: The Last Airbender*'s sprawling universe.

Trapped between the second and third seasons of the cartoon, *The Legend Of Korra* struggles to find its own identity. It feels like a throwaway side-story and fails to capitalise on the awesome characters or moments that the franchise is so loved for. We might venture to areas like Republic City and Air Temple Island, but there's little polish to the presentation, which quickly disrupts any authenticity it could have hoped to contain.

In hindsight, perhaps Platinum Games' involvement was ill-considered. Before now, every game the studio has released has scored no less than an 8/10 in the pages of **X-ONE**, but *The Legend Of Korra* lacks the depth or polish of anything the studio has released to date. Not only is it without the immensely satisfying, combo-heavy combat of titles like *Bayonetta* or *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance*, but Platinum has also failed to implement a simple – but stylish – system like the one found in *Anarchy Reigns*.

You'll spend your time fighting waves of uninspired minions, big bosses ripped from the show and a terrible camera that often leaves you battling blind. The big draw here should be that you're able to play with Korra's air-bending abilities, but much of the game is spent unlocking your four elemental attacks. Early fights feel underpowered and repetitive as a result, and by the time you do have full access to your suite of bending powers, the game comes to an abrupt end.

Even going back through the game on a higher difficulty – complete with your powers and new enemy configurations – can't save *The Legend Of Korra* from routine monotony. The dodge and counter techniques are inconsistent at the best of times, while your standard attacks encounter a baffling delay before triggering their animations.

It's tough to appreciate even the use of the original voice actors or gorgeous animated cutscenes when everything that surrounds them is so disappointing. We're sad to see Platinum Games' sterling reputation marred, but we doubt Activision will care too much – the *Spider-Man: Edge Of Time* and *X-Men: Destiny* publisher has undoubtedly become the curator of terrible licensed games.

JOSH WEST

VERDICT

The Legend Of Korra isn't broken by any means, it's just mediocre in almost every area. This is for diehard *Avatar* fans only.

4

XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE
JUST DANCE 2015
41 NEW HITS

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
In-house

GAME TYPE
Rhythm-action embarrassment

PLAYERS
1-6

DLC
Yes

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Hard

NEED TO UNLOCK
Got those moves like Jagger (50G)

IN BRIEF

Want to dance with your friends but you don't want to go outside? *Just Dance 2015* lets you get funky in front of Kinect away from the suffocating bustle of a club dance floor.

JAZZY
PERFECT
CRAZY
GOOD
FUNKY
PERFECT

"Just Dance 2015 is unashamedly a party game, featuring 45 tracks of headache-inducing pop music"

Just Dance 2015 features some of the biggest pop tracks around, from Lady Gaga's *Bad Romance* to PSY's *Gangnam Style*.

JUST DANCE 2015

www.just-dance.ubi.com /justdancegame @JustDanceGame

Lady Gaga sucks and we still can't dance

Full disclosure: in the dive bars this particular critic grew up in, all it took to be considered a good dancer was the ability to sync your hair's swing-cycle to various Mötley Crüe tracks, and the capacity to stay on your feet as soon as Pantera kicked a pit into overdrive. Which makes *Just Dance 2015*'s insistence on precise footsteps and casual hip-wiggling something of a revelation. Is *this* really what the kids consider dancing in the modern era of summertime good times? Never has so much time been spent lost in a haze of pumping beats and nauseatingly catchy choruses. Thanks for nothing, Lady Gaga.

In spite of its best efforts – and putting a touch of musical prejudice aside – *Just Dance 2015* still feels like child's play when held up against the mighty *Dance Central*, particularly after the release of Spotlight earlier in the year. Aside from the ability to track six dancers in a room simultaneously, it rarely feels like Kinect is being used to its full potential.

The choreography in *Dance Central* is built around the player committing a large number of small dance moves to memory, and throwing them together in a rhythmic sequence that makes sense. It makes great use of Kinect, ensuring you have to do the moves right to progress (and bloody Kinect knows when you aren't). It's imposing for beginners, but you begin to get the feeling you *might just* be able to pull out some super sweet moves the next time you're stranded in a club and that god awful Becky G track – *Built For This* – drains the life out of the dance floor (and our souls).

Just Dance 2015 on the other hand, is content with humouring you. "Oh, you tried to do that half step slide and pirouette but tripped over your coffee table," the game is no doubt quietly remarking to itself, "that's alright, try again." In fact, have an achievement for the effort. *You* should have been in *Dirty Dancing* instead of Patrick Swayze." We appreciate the kindness, but that didn't stop us looking like an idiot when we attempted to coach other players as part of Community Remix feature – which lets you record yourself dancing with Kinect in 1080p and share it in-game for all to see. We've never been so glad the Xbox One doesn't support voice messages.

So, *Just Dance 2015* is unashamedly a party game, featuring 45 tracks of headache-inducing pop music. And that's okay... but held up against *Dance Central Spotlight* there are far better dancing games to get your groove on to this year.

JOSH WEST

VERDICT

Not taking full advantage of Kinect is unforgivable. It's functionally sound, but sometimes feels like it would be just as fun to dance to a YouTube video.

5

XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE
NBA2K15
3
2K

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
2K Sports

DEVELOPER
Visual Concepts

GAME TYPE
Sports

PLAYERS
1-12

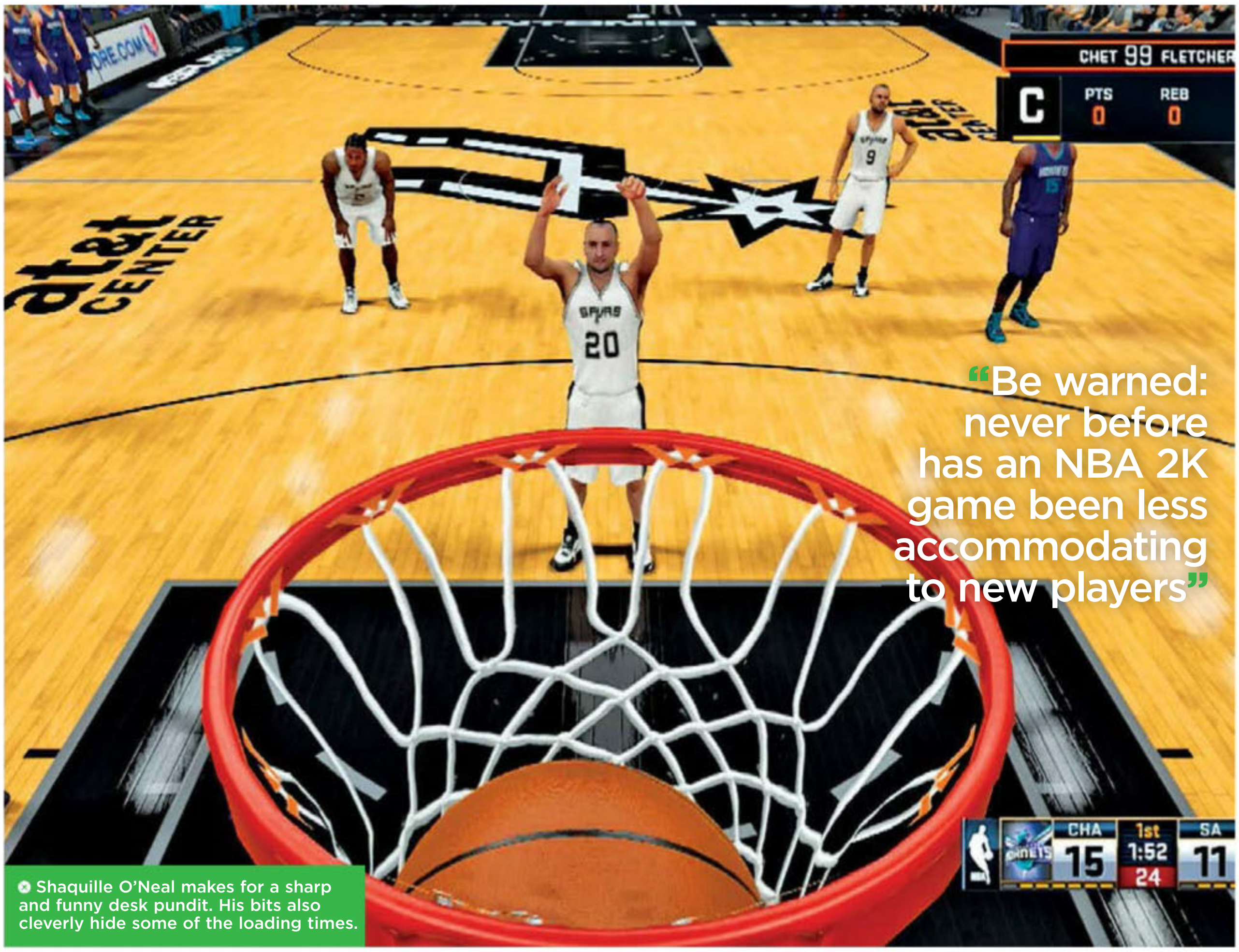
DLC
VIP VC Pack (In-game currency)

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Hard

NEED TO UNLOCK
There's More? (100G)

IN BRIEF

2K's world-beating basketball sim has never looked or played better. This year's game includes a soundtrack curated by Pharrell Williams, amusing new Shaquille O'Neal mid-match interludes and a terrific new shot meter system.



"Be warned: never before has an NBA 2K game been less accommodating to new players"

Shaquille O'Neal makes for a sharp and funny desk pundit. His bits also cleverly hide some of the loading times.

NBA 2K15

www.2k.com/games/nba-2k15 /NBA2K @NBA2K

Harder. Slower. Crisper. Slicker. Better.

If you ever played *Fight Night Champion*, you might have always wondered why more sports games don't weave a cinematic rags-to-riches story into their campaign. *NBA 2K15* is the first game to take that lead, and the result is a huge success. Some of the "characters" in it are voiced by real life NBA players – so don't expect charisma or great acting – but it's a mode that brings out the very best in the game. There are conversation trees and expensive-looking cutscenes, but it's the way that the story moves along with you, with your created player succeeding as you learn the ropes, that makes it feel special.

Be warned though: never before has an *NBA 2K* game been less welcoming to new players. Tutorials are now reduced to a series of brief (and quite poorly narrated) video clips, which is a rather big problem because the control scheme is so complex. With a bit of patience (and a few sneaky internet searches) you'll start mastering things after a couple of hours, but a playable tutorial is a bit of a crazy thing to omit in a game like this.

The best new addition to the on-court gameplay is the Shot Meter, which is a circular dial that sits at your players' feet. The meter will fluctuate as you move around the court, based on the skills and attributes of your created player, or the real-world skill set of the real NBA pros. If you try landing a dunk with a player who has a better success rate with open three-point jumpers, it's going to be harder to execute than if you use a player who's generally sharper up close. This means that you can't keep relying on the same old techniques; you often have to master the style of more than one player at a time.

MyTeam (the *NBA 2K* series' response to *FIFA*'s lucrative Ultimate Team) continues to be as compelling as the mode that inspired it, but as in the more recent *FIFA* games, a little too much emphasis is placed on grinding to earn in-game currency. That said, there are many, many cheeky little ways to earn cash quickly if you're crafty enough.

The presentation is as staggering as usual, the MyPark community mode now lets you gamble on your own team and the dynamic match commentary is still the best in the business. In all, a pretty great update.

CHET ROIVAS

VERDICT

If you aren't a basketball fanatic, learning the ropes in *NBA 2K15* is tough… but that journey is well worth taking. As smart and slick as fans expect.

8

XBOX ONE

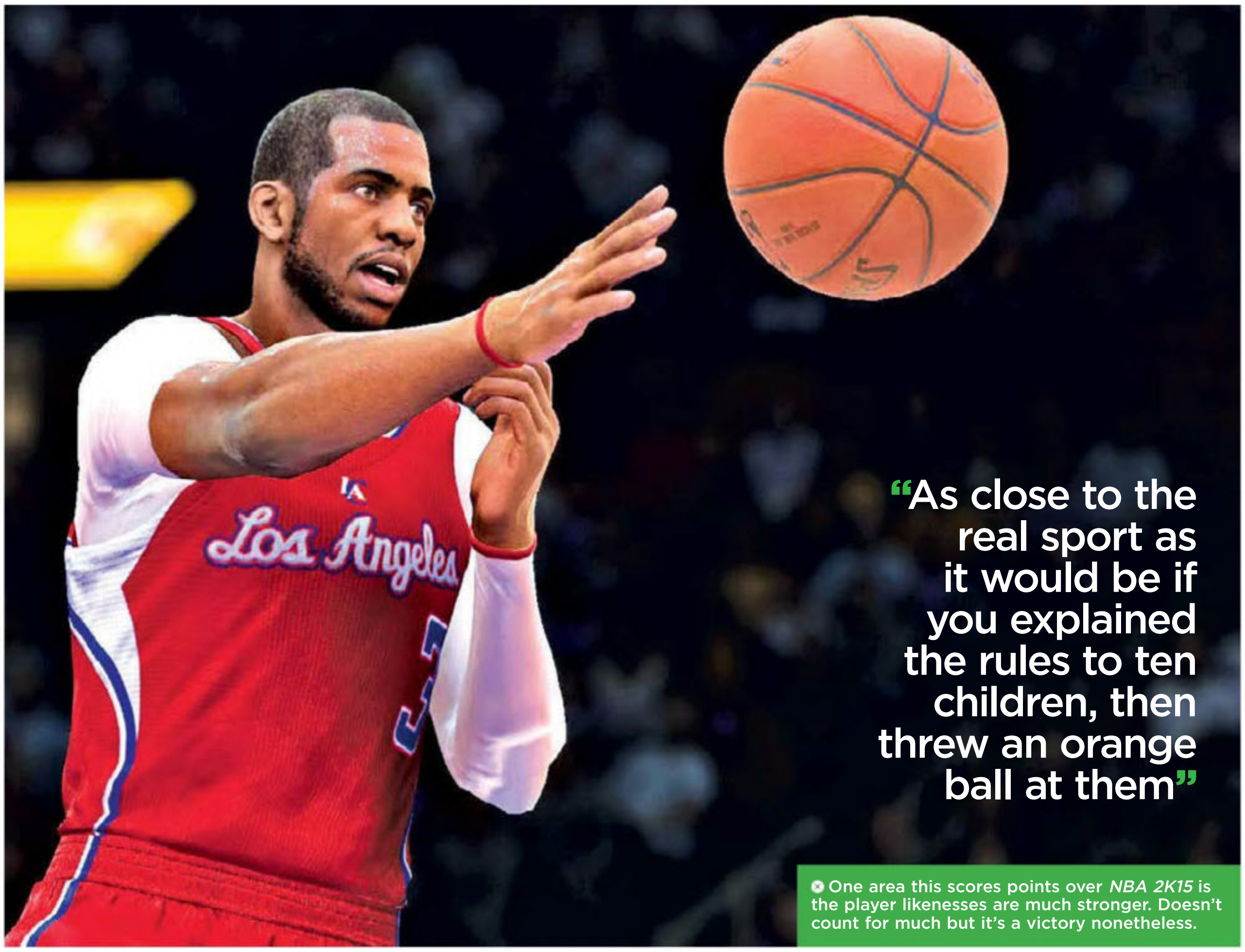
XBOX ONE
EA SPORTS
NBA LIVE 15
3

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER	**EA**
DEVELOPER	**In-house**
GAME TYPE	**Sports**
PLAYERS	**1-4**
DLC	**No**
ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY	**Moderate**
NEED TO UNLOCK	**Ice In The Veins (15G)**

IN BRIEF

It's basketball! Get the ball and throw it in the hoop more times than the other team do, which will almost definitely be Cleveland Cavaliers if you're playing online.



> "As close to the real sport as it would be if you explained the rules to ten children, then threw an orange ball at them"

One area this scores points over *NBA 2K15* is the player likenesses are much stronger. Doesn't count for much but it's a victory nonetheless.

NBA LIVE 15

www.easports.com/uk/nbalive /EASPORTSNBA @EASPORTSNBA

The Philadelphia Sixers of basketball games

It's better than last year. If **X-ONE** reviews were restricted to five words, you'd probably hear the champagne corks popping at EA's headquarters from here. Unfortunately there are 350 more words to go and we're going to use them to say things like 'boring' and 'abysmal' and 'buy *NBA 2K15*' and 'apple slice'.

In fact, we could review this game with three words – buy *NBA 2K15*. Or two words and four initials. Whatever. Point is, that game is *so* much better, it renders *NBA Live 15*'s existence redundant. This isn't like a *FIFA* vs *PES* argument, which is the gaming equivalent of apples vs oranges. It's more apples vs an apple slice with teeth-marks in and a worm crawling out the bottom. This isn't a question of personal preference. It's a question of sanity.

It might not seem like a fair comparison given the *NBA 2K* series has had aeons to solve the long-standing problems with virtual basketball while *NBA Live* has only really just started tackling them. But these are full-price games we're evaluating, not school projects, so there isn't any room for charity. These are the problems that *NBA Live* hasn't solved yet: it doesn't have the rugged physicality of real basketball, defending never even threatens to be enjoyable, the AI is absolutely abysmal (wait until you see the ball bounce off a player's face for the first time, or the hundredth) and it's about as close to the real sport as it would be if you explained the rules to ten children, then threw an orange ball at them. Being unrealistic never hurt *NBA Jam*'s success but God, at least that game knew how to be *fun*. *NBA Live 15* doesn't even know what fun is.

The one positive *NBA Live* has is that it doesn't wrap itself up in finger-tying controls like *NBA 2K*, so it's a much less daunting prospect to play, but when 'It uses fewer buttons!' becomes a positive, you know we're reaching. It's also stuffed with game modes but they don't make the game any more tolerable and regardless, as part of the forced tutorial (sigh), you have to play Game 7 of the NBA Finals. Wait. What? Isn't that the entire point of the game? It would be like Mario kicking off his adventures by throwing Bowser into a pit of lava.

In other words: boring. Abysmal. Buy *NBA 2K15*. Apple slice?

RYAN KING

VERDICT

NBA Live 15 has made marginal improvements since last year's effort but there's still a long way to go before this is fit to tie *NBA 2K15*'s shoelaces.

4

XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE
Chariot

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Frima Studio

DEVELOPER
In-house

GAME TYPE
casket-wheeling puzzle platformer

PLAYERS
1-2

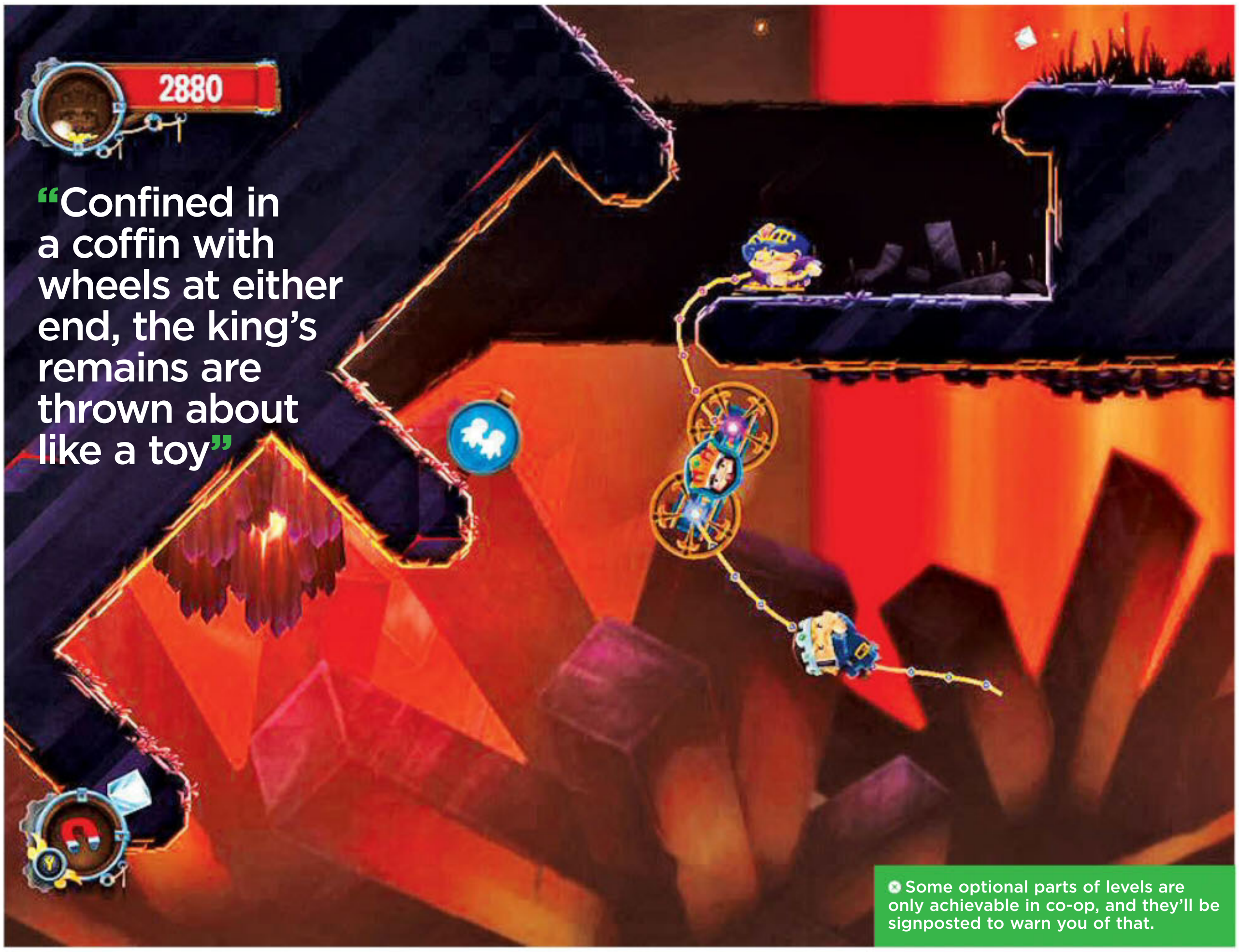
DLC
N/A

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Easy

NEED TO UNLOCK
The Royal Whee (25G)

IN BRIEF

After the death of her father, the princess protagonist – with the optional help of her fiancé – must transport the king's wheeled casket through underground levels until she finds a resting place that satisfies his ghost.



"Confined in a coffin with wheels at either end, the king's remains are thrown about like a toy"

Some optional parts of levels are only achievable in co-op, and they'll be signposted to warn you of that.

CHARIOT

www.chariotgame.com /ChariotGame @ChariotGame

Undertaker Simulator 2014

Given the scale and nature of her task, this princess sure spends a lot of time smiling. That might be due in part to her limited animation set, but it's probably more because transporting her father's corpse is actually a lot of fun. Though she's respectful enough of his spirit to obey its whining commands that she find him a better final resting place, his body receives no such care. Confined in a coffin with large wheels at either end, the king's remains are thrown about like a toy.

First, you learn to push the casket along and over bumps in the road, perhaps even hopping on for a ride as it rushes down a slope. Next, you learn to latch a rope onto either end to pull it along behind you, perhaps jumping on it first to reach a higher area before yanking it up too. Soon enough, you'll be revelling in momentum: pushing the casket along, leaping aboard, jumping off onto a platform, and then catching the casket with your rope before it wheels out of reach.

Moving the casket around like this feels so good that it isn't even frustrating that the princess can't go far without it. It's an excuse to ignore the signposts that point you to the exit, take other paths and fill out your map. Every new world adds colourful new environments and new features to contend with, like life rails only the princess can stand on and death rails that will only support the casket. *Chariot*'s core mechanic is so satisfying that the game only starts to slip when it tries to add things to the mix. This is sold as a couch co-op experience, but outside of small areas designed specifically for two – think *LittleBigPlanet* – multiplayer is likely to break momentum for all but the most synchronised pairs of players. The enemies also feel unnecessary, appearing as they do when the casket makes too much noise, which seems like a strange thing to punish in a game based on movement.

In most cases, however, *Chariot* strikes the right balance. The town you visit between levels is a simple menu to unlock gadgets, with a friendly skeleton who cracks jokes as you do so. And the story has just enough exposition to give you a reason for your journey, staying out of the way of what the game is really about.

JORDAN ERICA WEBBER

VERDICT

Its relative lack of additional features might make *Chariot* seem simple, but its core mechanic is enjoyable enough to sell the game on its own.

8

XBOX ONE

XBOX ONE
FANTASIA
MUSIC EVOLVED
3

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Disney Interactive Studios

DEVELOPER
Harmonix

GAME TYPE
Rhythm-action

PLAYERS
1-2

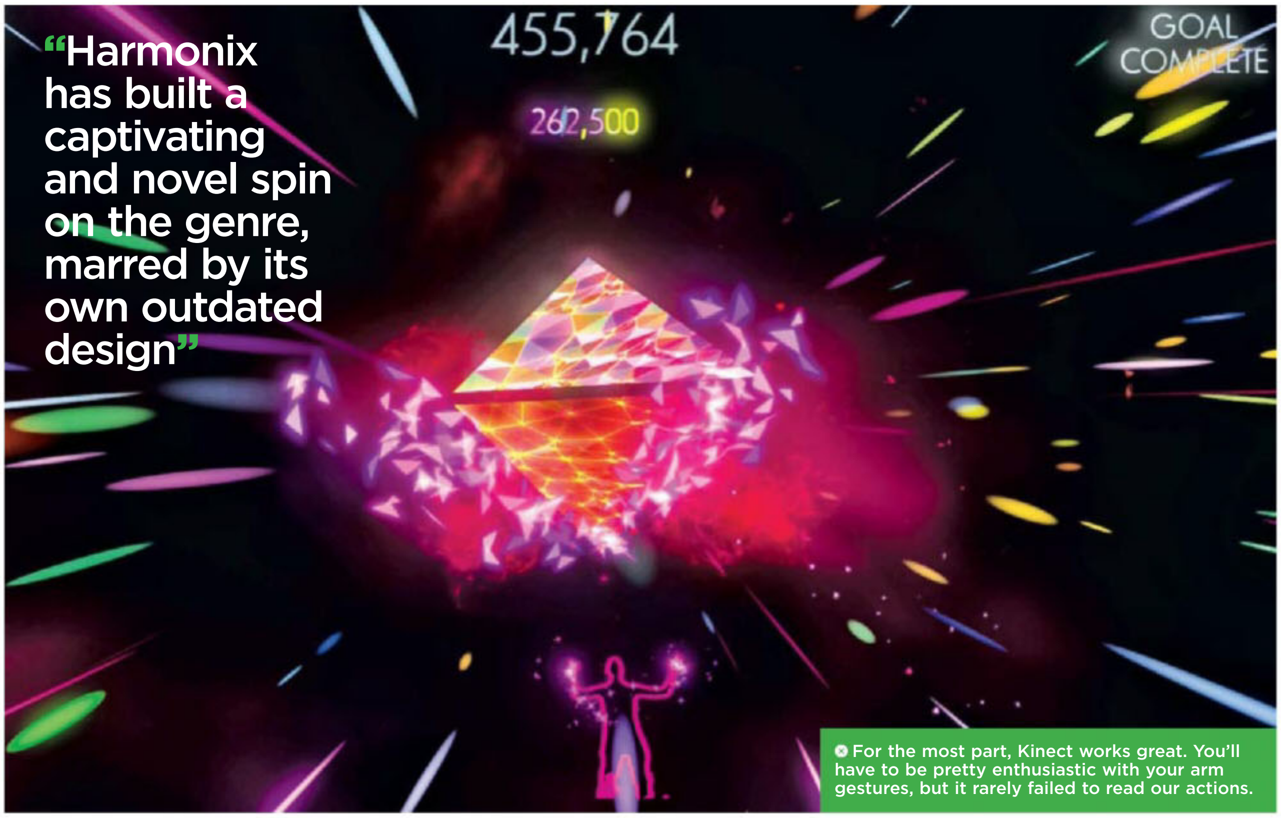
DLC
18 additional songs will be available to download after launch, alongside three remix expansion packs

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Easy

NEED TO UNLOCK
Mix Master (50G)

IN BRIEF

You play the role of conductor in a motion-controlled rhythm-action title that has you waggling your arms across a symphony of pop songs and classical arrangements, guided by the legendary sorcerer Yen Sid.



> "Harmonix has built a captivating and novel spin on the genre, marred by its own outdated design"

For the most part, Kinect works great. You'll have to be pretty enthusiastic with your arm gestures, but it rarely failed to read our actions.

FANTASIA MUSIC EVOLVED

www.harmonixmusic.com/games/disney-fantasia-music-evolved/ /fantasiagame @FantasiaGame

Taking the Mickey

It's strange that, as a Disney product, *Fantasia: Music Evolved* fails to replicate the The House Of Mouse magic in all its wondrous and effervescent glory. But what's stranger is that Harmonix's spirited rhythm-action game can't be arsed to even bother trying. Instead, it ignores the obvious route of coasting along on nostalgia value and has produced a tactfully crafted explorative musical journey that offers a surprisingly contemporary spin on the rhythm-action genre. Interacting with the music is meant to resemble a grand conductor presiding over an orchestra, but in actual fact the resulting flailing has more in common with directing automobiles into some kind of awful traffic accident. Nonetheless, the act of punching (or 'Iron Man-ing' as we call it), swiping and sweeping your hands through the air in correspondence with the song components is gratifying and entirely responsive.

Kinect has been given a bad rap but for the most part Fantasia demonstrates that with a deft touch and a keen sense of awareness, a compelling gaming experience that offers player ownership over the on-screen action is entirely possible. In fact, that idea of ownership is one that feels intrinsic throughout the design of *Fantasia*. The game isn't particularly fussed with scores and star rating, instead it's geared more towards creative expression. Every track in the game has three versions – there's the standard studio recording and then two remixes. Playing through a song there will be certain breaks where you can pull different elements from the various alternative tracks, creating your own entirely unique composition. Indeed, there's something incredibly rewarding about playing back your song and finding how you've twisted The Police's *Message In A Bottle* into a portentous mishmash of progressive rock and grand orchestral theatrics.

But while Harmonix has masterfully implemented wild gesticulation into a meaningful gameplay experience, it falters in its approach to progression. Throughout the campaign you're forced into replaying songs multiple times to unlock the alternative tracks, and for no reason whatsoever, you're given a double helping of tutorials to further add to the grind. It's a bizarrely antiquated approach, one that suggests a deeper concern with the campaign's brevity.

Despite the fact that *Fantasia*'s track list might be on the short side, it's matched with a variety of remixes that offer an encouraging amount of creative freedom that offers all the longevity it needs. Harmonix has built a captivating and novel spin on the genre, marred by its own outdated design. If its campaign had replicated the freeform structure of its music library, then this could've been a lot more fun.

DAVE SCARBOROUGH

VERDICT

While there's a significant grind to overcome, there's still a huge amount to like; Harmonix once again proves that its the best at what it does.

7

XBOX 360

XBOX 360
MX vs ATV
SUPERCROSS
RP
nordic games

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Nordic Games

DEVELOPER
Rainbow Studios

GAME TYPE
Racing

PLAYERS
1-12

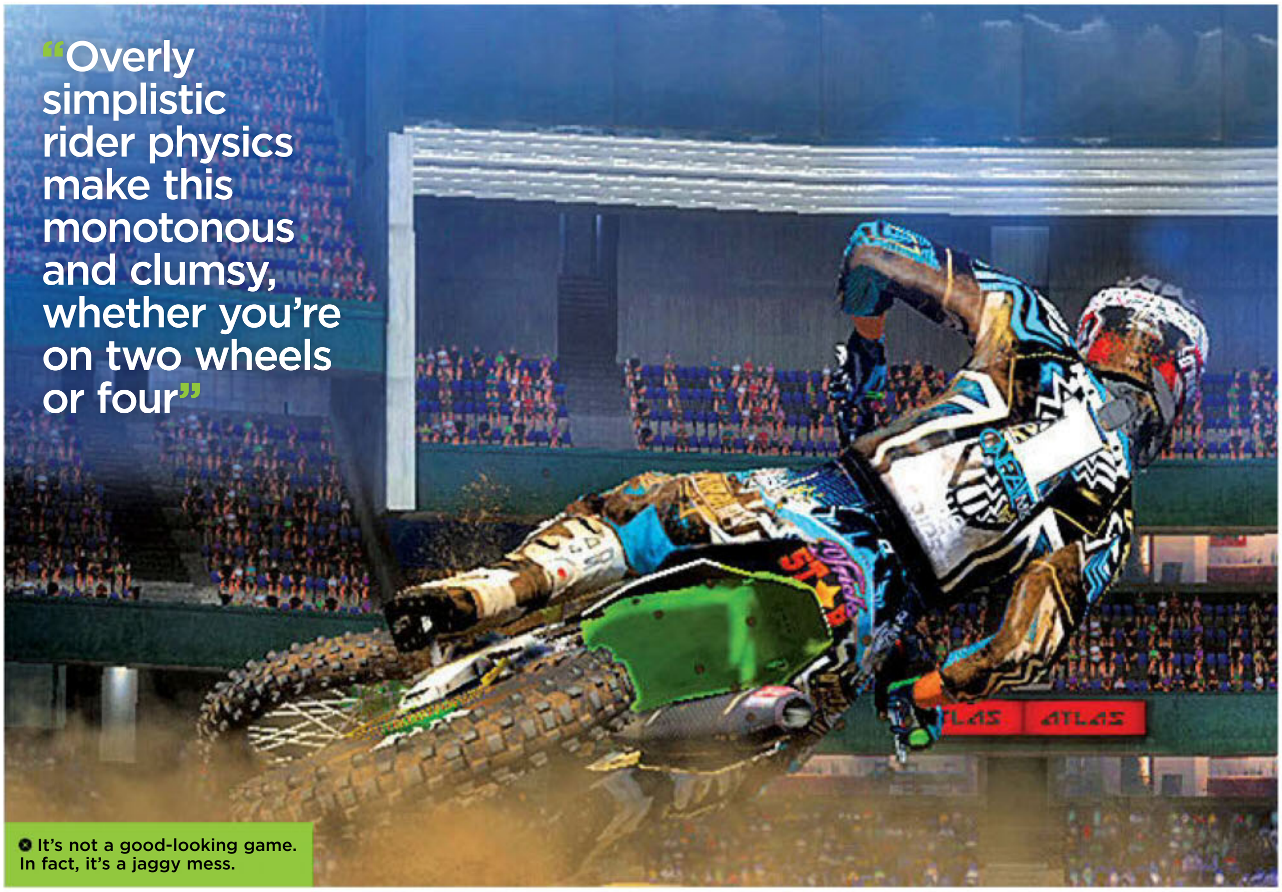
DLC
NA

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Easy

NEED TO UNLOCK
Wheelie King (15G)

IN BRIEF

Motocross bikes racing each other on muddy tracks, ATVs racing each other on muddy trakcs, Motocross bikes racing ATVs… on muddy tracks. It's hardly breaking new ground here, is it?



"Overly simplistic rider physics make this monotonous and clumsy, whether you're on two wheels or four"

It's not a good-looking game. In fact, it's a jaggy mess.

MX VS ATV SUPERCROSS

www.mxvsatv.com /mxvsatvsupercross @mxvsatv

Golden brown, texture like mud

THQ's *MX vs ATV* games have a long-standing tradition of being 'pretty good'. A true niche series – appealing to a specific bunch of petrol-headed thrill-seekers, giving them exactly what they want, and not costing either the developer or publisher a great deal. One of the true B-game success stories.

Which is why many were so excited to see the series return, now under the Nordic Games banner, the company who picked up a handful of the now-fallen Toy Headquarters' intellectual properties. Sadly, this new version comes nowhere near capturing the magic of *Reflex* and *Unleashed*. In fact, it's a huge step backwards.

One of the sharpest elements of the older games was the Rider Reflex system, which let you move your bike and rider independently with each stick, allowing for a satisfying level of control. *Supercross* purports to maintain this system, but instead of the analogue subtlety of past games, here it feels almost digital – an on/off switch that has all the nuance of a Nicky Minaj song. A fundamental concept of any motocross or ATV game is the 'preload'. This is the fairly simple action of pushing your weight forward into a jump, pulling back as you hit the peak (thus propelling yourself further), and then landing smoothly on two wheels. It's a basic idea, but when executed well becomes very satisfying.

However, *Supercross*' overly simplistic rider physics make this monotonous and clumsy, whether you're on two wheels or four. And it's a sense of tedium that carries over into the rest of the game. The so-called 'career' amounts to nothing more than a laborious series of race events on bland tracks, and the eponymous MX vs ATV races don't feel dangerous or thrilling, because the game's physics engine is so flimsy. Also, you can win races by cutting corners – the only penalty being a stern message on screen. The AI will often use this tactic against you, effectively punishing you for riding correctly.

Quite how this series has fallen so far is a bit of a mystery. It was never at the cutting edge of race game design, but it could always rely on its fundamentals to provide and engaging game of mud-shredding motorsport. Compared to the recently released official *MXGP* game – itself hardly a classic – this is ugly and amateurish. A grubby disappointment, and not even worth the laundry bill.

JON DENTON

VERDICT

Ugly, limited and significantly worse than previous games in the series. This once-loved franchise has fallen from grace, perhaps never to be loved again.

3

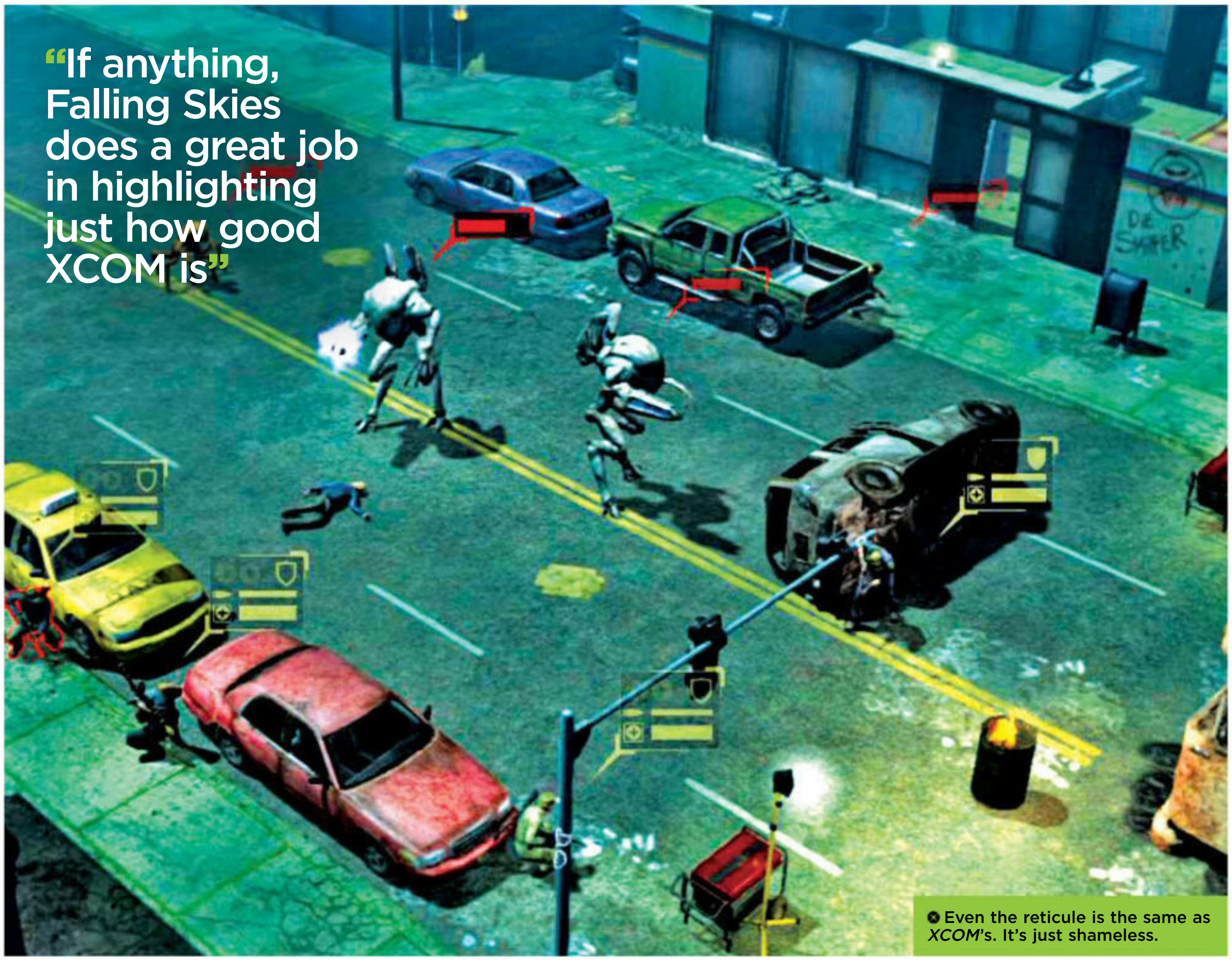
XBOX 360

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER	**Little Orbit**
DEVELOPER	**Taurus Games**
GAME TYPE	**Turn-based strategy**
PLAYERS	**1**
DLC	**NA**
ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY	**Easy**
NEED TO UNLOCK	**Checkmate (50G)**

IN BRIEF

The game of the TV show that you've probably never seen. Dr. Noah from *ER* battles aliens on earth with a bunch of friends. It's all very blue.



> "If anything, Falling Skies does a great job in highlighting just how good XCOM is"

Even the reticule is the same as *XCOM*'s. It's just shameless.

FALLING SKIES

www.littleorbit.com/falling-skies-the-game /fallingskies @fallingskiesTNT

Xbomb, Xbomb, you're not XCOM

Licensed games are nowhere near as prevalent as they used to be, making *Falling Skies* a true curiosity. This is a fully-boxed, last gen-only take on the reasonably-popular-if-you-like-that-sort-of-thing scifi show starring that doctor from ER, sent out to drift into the ether during the busiest period for our industry all year.

Typically, crappy licensed games tend to ape whatever trend is happening in action gaming right now, but *Falling Skies* at least tries to do justice to its source material by going for something more cerebral. It just happens to be that 'something cerebral' is a direct, shameless, fonts-and-all clone of the peerless *XCOM: Enemy Unknown*.

Except, of course, it's awful. The amount *Falling Skies* has ripped off its inspiration is incredible, though. You take a four-person (later, six) team into battle on bland maps, moving them one at a time, seeking cover, and waiting for the alien enemies to take their turns. The icon for cover is still a shield. You can set your team to a direct equivalent of overwatch. It even cuts to a slow motion close up when you kill something.

If anything, *Falling Skies* does a great job in highlighting just how good *XCOM* is. The enemy AI here is so poor that it often just closes distance on you with no thought as to the positioning of your teammates, and the maps are cluttered with rubbish, making it extremely difficult to make any sort of plan. It's a mess, in truth.

Outside of battle, you have the ability to research new weaponry, recruit new soldiers and generally do anything you could do in *XCOM* if *XCOM* had been lobotomised. It's quite astounding how much worse *Falling Skies* actually is, considering it shares almost every single element with Firaxis' masterpiece. It just doesn't have the intelligence behind it to make what should be a fairly pedestrian experience exciting.

XCOM makes you care so much about your team, creates moments of pure unscripted melodrama in each match. *Falling Skies* just lets you plod towards a goal and shoot things. Stakes are low because you care so little about your team, and the threat to the planet feels completely redundant. Credit goes to Taurus, then, for ripping off something interesting, but that's not enough to even faintly recommend this misguided and tedious tie-in.

JON DENTON

VERDICT

An egregious rip off of a classic game, and one that manages to capture none of its class or drama. Even fans of the show will be disappointed.

3

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ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CALL OF DUTY ADVANCED WARFARE

Sledgehammer Games has done what Infinity Ward couldn't. It has successfully brought *Call Of Duty* into the next-generation, and it's done it with some serious style. Just as it does every November, *COD* fever is sweeping the Xbox Live servers as players leap into *Advanced Warfare* for the very first time. If you're a seasoned player don't come in expecting to simply grab your favourite rifle and immediately find yourself smashing the leaderboards. The Xbox One has given one advantageous studio the opportunity to completely change the state of play.

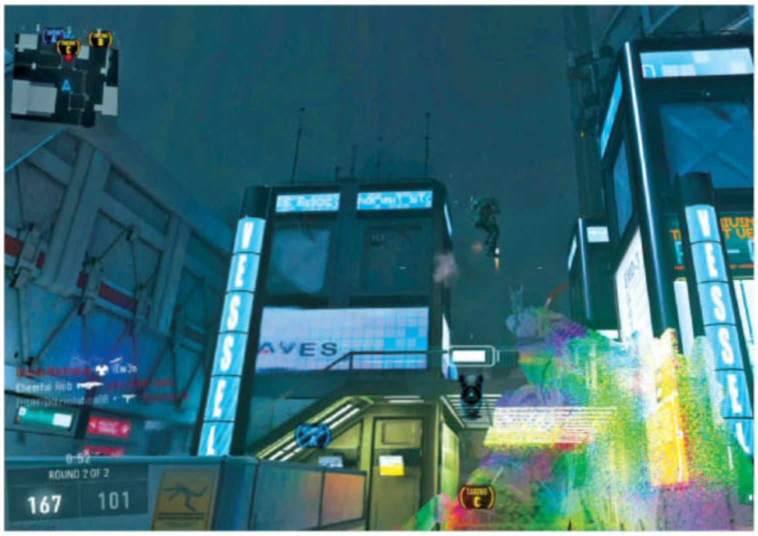
Advanced Warfare has introduced jetpack-assisted double jumps, dashes and slides. There are brand new energy-powered weapons and perks. It's letting soldiers get around maps with an unprecedented level of speed and manoeuvrability. You can no longer be content with just watching your corners and hoping for a lucky no-scope, instead, death can – and will – come from any and every angle. For the first time since *Modern Warfare* was released in 2007, there are a couple of essential new mechanics to get your head around if you want to find success in the new era of *Call Of Duty*.

After dropping more hours into the multiplayer than we'd feel comfortable divulging, we've assembled the top tips we think you'll need to get off to a victorious start when you do finally enlist in *Advanced Warfare* and start gunning for your first Prestige.

UNDERSTANDING BOOST JUMPING

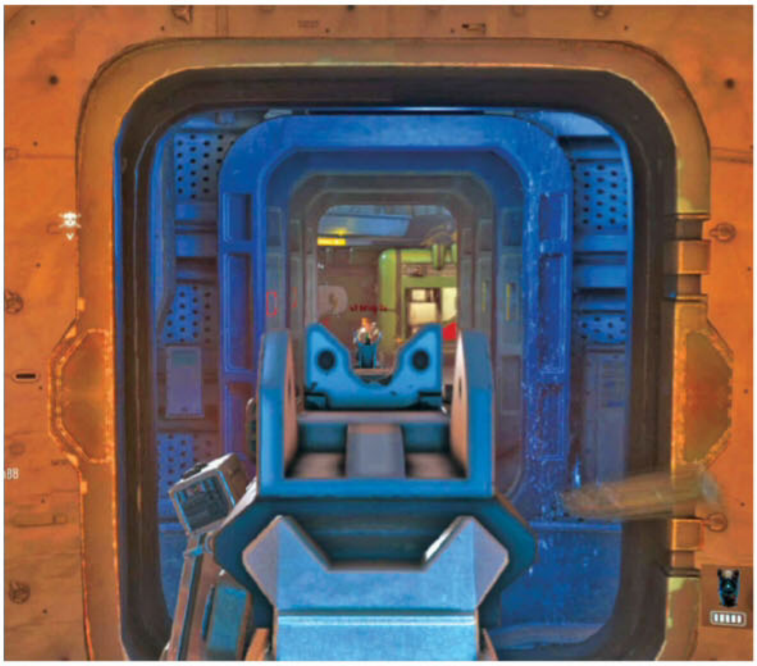
The most advanced mechanic to arrive in *Call Of Duty* since drop-shotting and quick scoping became so prevalent is the boost jump. Hitting A once will do a standard jump, though hitting it again in quick succession will let you boost higher into the air – essentially letting you double jump. It's worth noting that while there is no restriction on boost jumping and you can do it whenever you want to reach higher ground, it will unfortunately reveal your location on the map every time you do so.

EXTRA HANG TIME WITH AIR DASHING



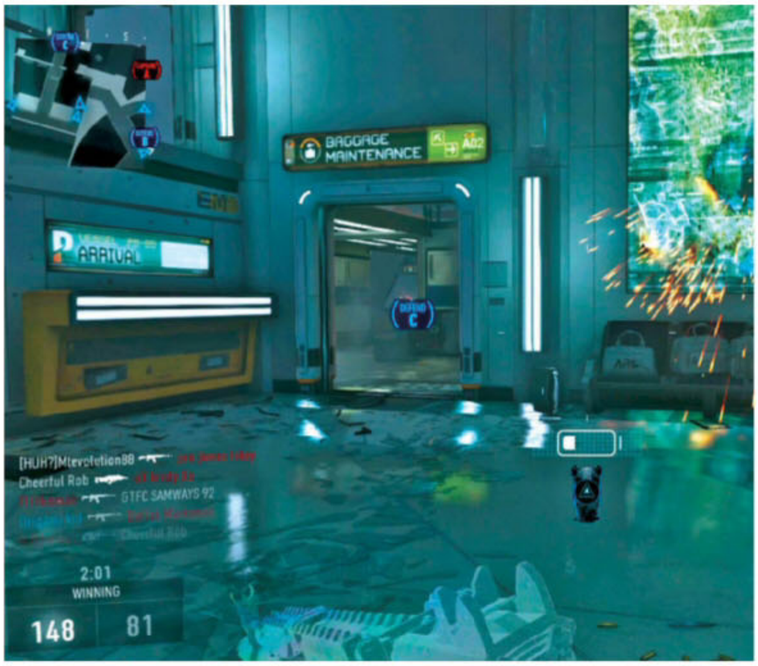
One of the harder elements to master of *Advanced Warfare*'s movement mechanics is the boost dodge. This can be activated by jumping, clicking sprint [LS] and a direction in quick succession. This will let you quickly navigate across the environment and dodge enemy fire, though it is limited. While in the air, you can dodge in any direction, though it does have a recharge period. While the boost dodge manoeuvre can be done with a standard jump, it can also be chain-comboed with the double.

BOOST SLIDE



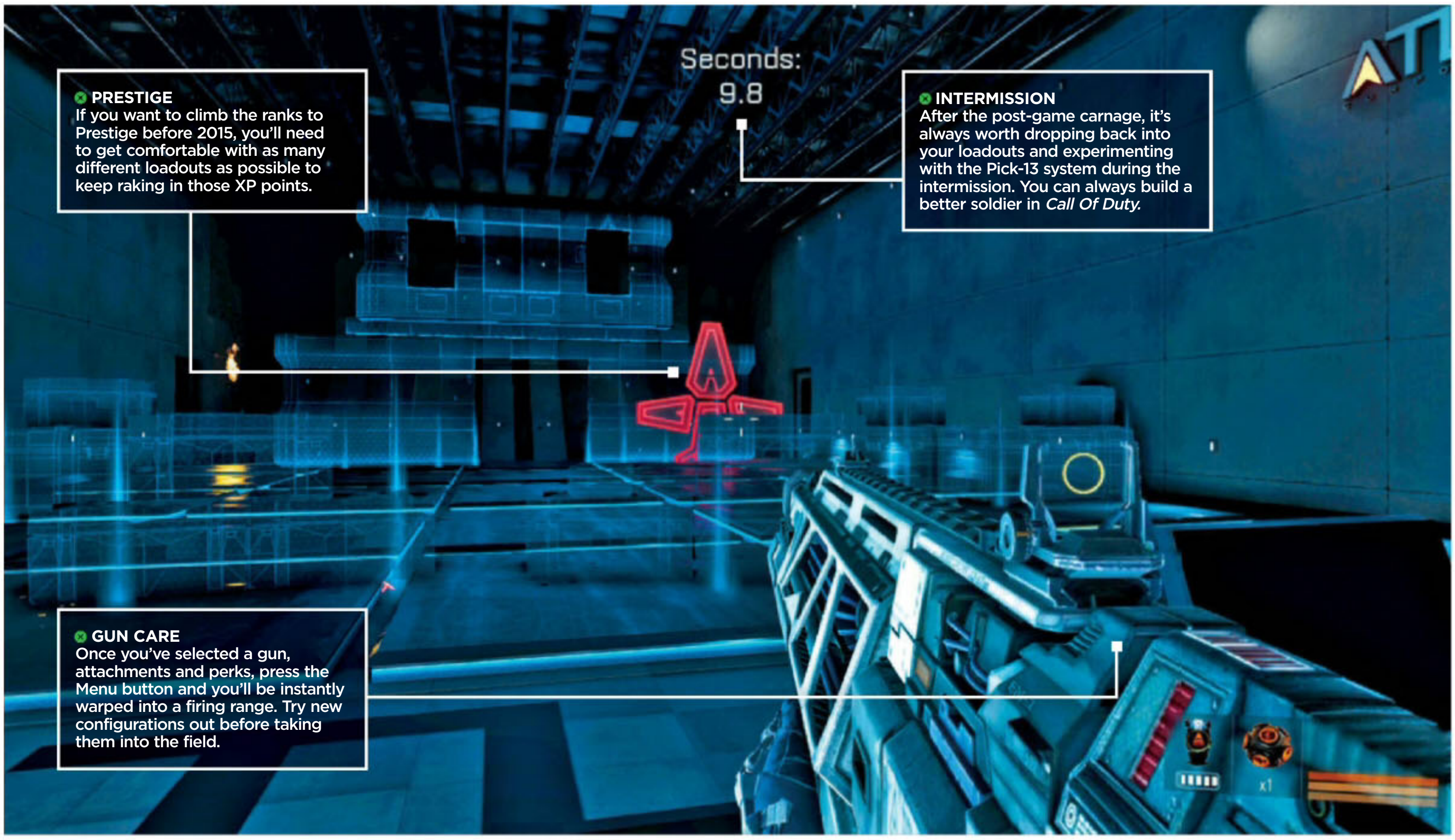
Until you reach level 32 and unlock the Tier 2 Perk Gung Ho, there isn't a great lot of use for the boost slide. Not only does it use one of your precious dodge recharges, but it also pings your position to nearby enemies. In *Ghosts*, sprint sliding into cover was a useful mechanic to survive; here – where most of the action takes place above you – it's less helpful. Still, it can be activated by sprinting [LS] and holding crouch [B]. Once you've unlocked and equipped Gung Ho you'll be able to finally shoot while sliding.

EXO ABILITIES



As part of the Pick-13 system, you'll be able to select and equip (or not, it's up to you) an Exo Ability. These are activated and deactivated with a tab of LB and are governed by an energy gauge – once that runs empty, you'll either need to wait until it recharges or until you die and respawn to use the Ability again. Make sure you set relevant classes for game modes; Cloak is great in Domination for example, but you might find the health boosting Exo Stim a better choice for those intense gunfire exchanges in TDM.

HEAD TO THE GUN RANGE

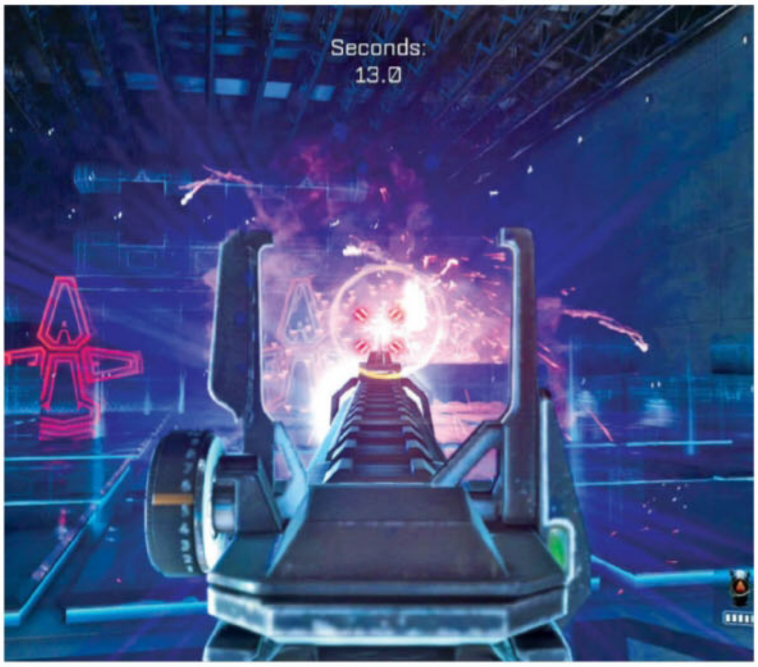


PRESTIGE
If you want to climb the ranks to Prestige before 2015, you'll need to get comfortable with as many different loadouts as possible to keep raking in those XP points.

INTERMISSION
After the post-game carnage, it's always worth dropping back into your loadouts and experimenting with the Pick-13 system during the intermission. You can always build a better soldier in *Call Of Duty*.

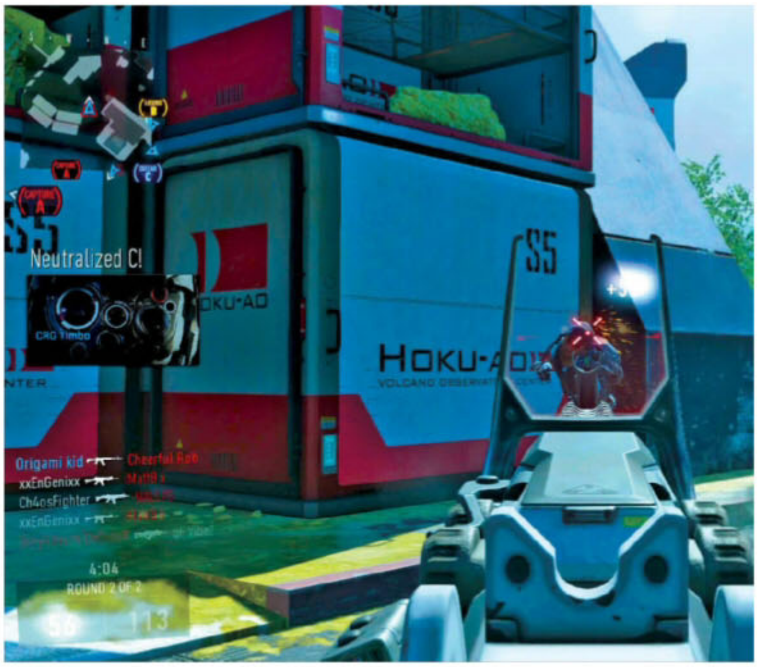
GUN CARE
Once you've selected a gun, attachments and perks, press the Menu button and you'll be instantly warped into a firing range. Try new configurations out before taking them into the field.

USING HEAVY WEAPONS



Heavy weapons are a new addition to *Advanced Warfare*, but they seem to be struggling to fit into the regular flow of games. The EM1 laser in particular was almost universally adopted by players at launch before being dropped for old comforts. But these weapons do have a place in the game, and, if you can get your head around them, they can be insanely useful for suppressing advancing enemy packs – which will get you *plenty* of assists. It's also great as a hip-fire weapon at short to medium range.

GET THE HANG OF ASSAULT RIFLES

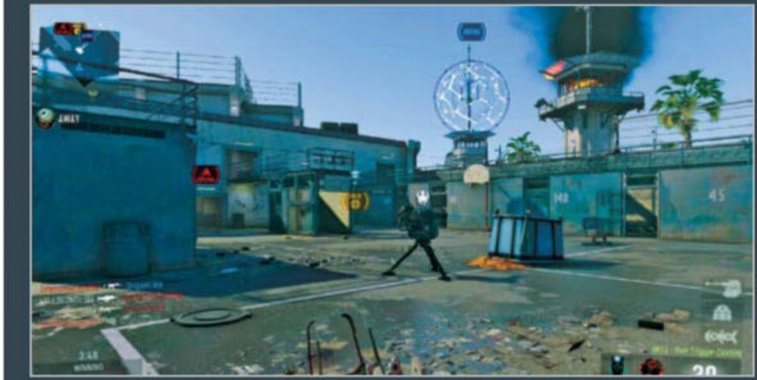


Everybody has a favourite gun, but *Advanced Warfare* seems to have set itself up to be an assault rifle-dominated game. Weapon sway has been basically abolished for the assault rifles, meaning you can aim, pre-aim and ADS for longer without having to tempt the right-stick back into position. In fact, because of the crazy high weapon sway on sniper rifles, an assault rifle with a hybrid or ACOG scope attached is going to do the job in most long-range scenarios too – especially once you get that MK14 unlocked.

TIPS TO DOMINATE UPLINK

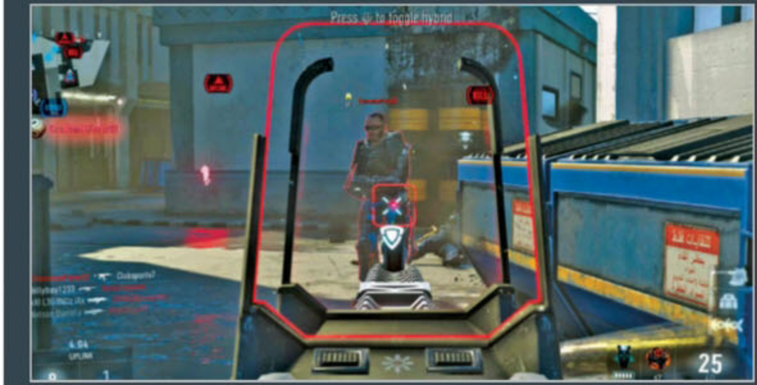
Uplink is a brand-new game mode introduced in *Advanced Warfare*, and it's fantastic fun. Think of it like futuristic basketball, only you need to slam dunk a round satellite – and a few enemies – to find mighty victory

UNDERSTANDING THE RULES



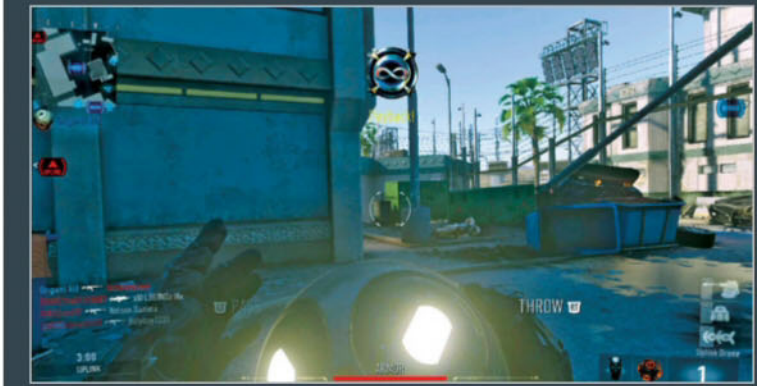
Uplink is a fast-paced and insanely fun mode that you should all try. Simply put, there are two teams, two goals and one ball. The rest will come naturally. Throwing the ball through the goal will net you one point, while dunking will land you two.

ADAPT YOUR LOADOUT



If you plan on being the drone runner, be sure to edit your loadout appropriately. It's vitally important that you be as speedy as possible, so make sure you take an SMG, the Lightweight, Fast Hands and Gung Ho perks.

GET YOUR THROWS DOWN



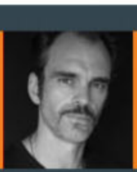
When you're holding the ball, you can chuck it to team mates with the RT, or you can try hitting enemies with it. This will lower their weapon as they go to auto-catch it, giving you the perfect opportunity to gun them down and reclaim it.

THE VOICE OF TREVOR PHILLIPS FROM
GRAND THEFT AUTO V

We have a lovely conversation with Steven Ogg, the face and voice behind GTA V's Trevor on life after starring in one of the biggest games of all time

TREVOR PHILLIPS

VOICE OF GTA V'S INSANE TREVOR



> **"If you walk down the street, who hasn't thought, 'Man I'd just love to f***ing clock that idiot upside the head', but in real life there are consequences!"**

Steven, how's another day in the life of Trevor Phillips treating you?
I am good, just trying to cross tasks off the list. Like, what the f***? When did this become life? Writing a to do list, and doing it?

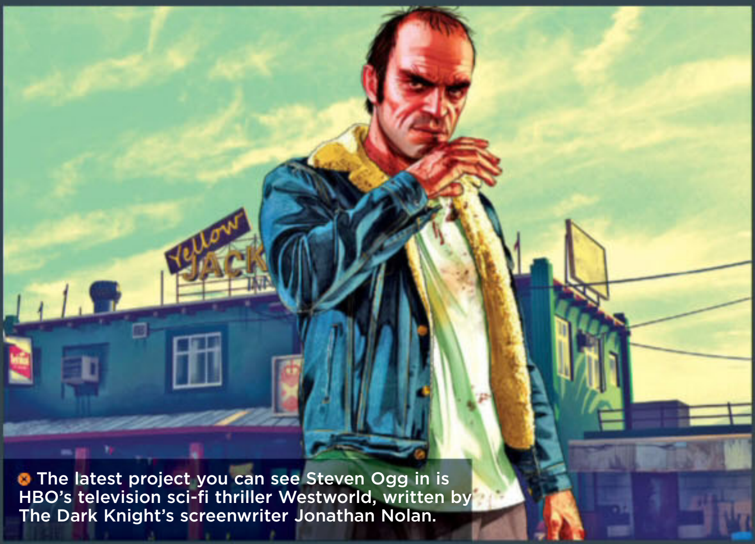
Probably around a year ago!
It's unbelievable, I think I need something more out of my life than this.

You could always do another videogame?
F*** videogames! [laughs]

Did you hear about the *Grand Theft Auto V* next-gen release?
It's actually funny, yesterday someone tweeted at me asking if I was going to be in L.A. with Rockstar for the release, and I was like 'What?' – this is just to give you yet another example of how much of an idiot I am – 'Why, what's going on?' Then they send me the stuff over and I see the first-person [mode], which looks f***ing incredible, and I'm like 'Wow, I didn't know about any of that!'

Have you had a chance to play through *GTA V*?
Honestly, I got that little *Grand Theft Auto* game… and I never played it. Well, I tried, but it's just not my cup of tea.

Are you not a big gamer then?
I'm a no gamer. I like to watch movies and read books. I tried, but I watched my son play [*GTA V*]. I tried driving for a bit, killed someone… I don't know, it just wasn't my thing. The last game I was sort of into was *Halo*, but I got really frustrated. I don't like [opening] missions, I like having an actual goal, like 'You need to go to the battlefield and clear out the enemy, stuff like that – that's what I enjoy.



The latest project you can see Steven Ogg in is HBO's television sci-fi thriller Westworld, written by The Dark Knight's screenwriter Jonathan Nolan.

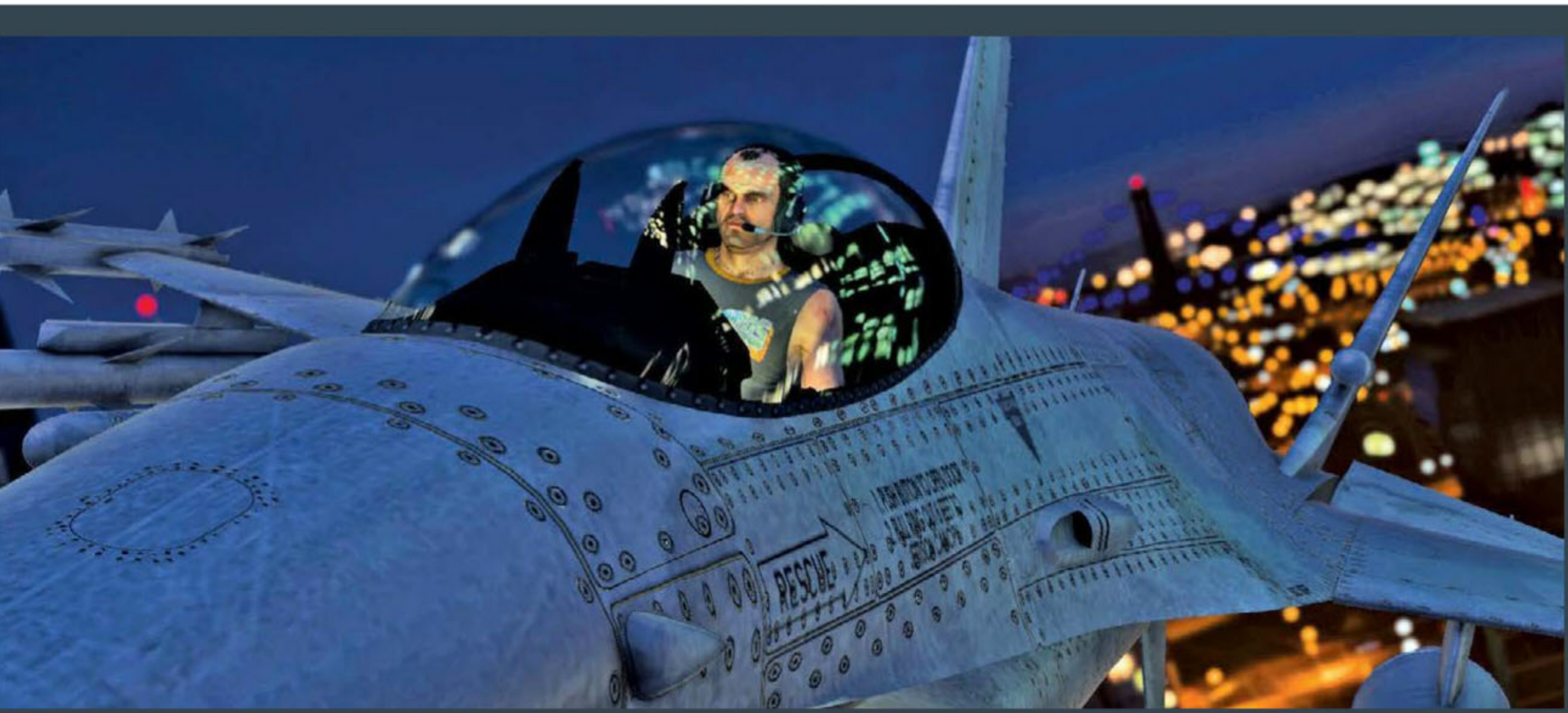
***GTA V* is one of the biggest videogames ever made, has that affected your day-to-day life?**
You know, I've always said it doesn't change the way I drink my coffee or take a piss in the morning, so it hasn't really changed anything.

How was the audition process for *GTA V*? Was it similar to other auditions you've done in the past?
It's pretty much the same thing. It's actually funny, because the four years I spent working on *GTA* – from the get-go it's cloaked in secrecy – I didn't even know what the project was. It was just an audition like any other – aside from that there was no script. There was a dummy script, it wasn't the real one that we would shoot, which four years ago I thought was quite bizarre. Whereas now on the other projects I've worked on, I just shot HBO's *Westworld* with *Interstellar*'s Jonathan Nolan, and it was the same thing. *GTA* has actually been a lovely training ground for what the business is nowadays. People are so protective of their products now, that a lot of time they don't provide actors with more than what they need to know, because they don't want things released.

Where did Trevor's voice come from, or is it just your angry voice?
I think it would be different if Trevor was British, and I was doing a British accent throughout, or some accent, it would have changed it somewhat. This is one of those actor questions – 'Is the character you?' Well, all I've f***ing got is me. I don't become someone else [laughs]. You don't change who you are, so obviously, his anger… generally, for instance, if I'm in an elevator – and this has happened before – and I'm talking to someone about what's just happened on the streets of New York. You know, 'I'm f***ing cycling down here, and this F***ING cab just F***ING cut me off,' and then If I'm getting angry talking like that I've had heads turn towards me and go, 'Holy shit! You're Trevor right?' [The voice] comes from me, [and now] if I curse or get angry, there's an audio recognition now.

[*Ed: having the voice of Trevor screaming directly at you on the phone is a terrifying experience – we'd have hated to be in that elevator*]

***GTA V* was fully motion-captured, Did you find it difficult to play a very physical and violent character when you're also having to interact with other actors?**
It was fun! When you get to be physical, it sort of informs and motivates your character more. One of the first days of shooting *GTA* was when I had to stamp in Johnny's head from *Lost & Damned*. I talked about his girlfriend, discussed some things with him and then brought him close to me and proceeded to smash him with a bottle and stomp on his head. When I'm doing that, it's like, 'Oh wow, shit! That's interesting.' It's quite a release when you're on set and you're stomping on a head. It's real interesting.



Were there any scenes that you found uncomfortable to read through or act?
That's the way Trevor speaks, the way he communicates, that's the way this character rolls. It's my job to do it, so I didn't really… Of course, a lot of times it was very funny. Like, 'Oh my god, I've got to say this?' funny. There weren't any times I was cringing, thinking I can't say *this* or I can't say *that* word. That doesn't mean I necessarily agree with [all of] it, but that's part of the challenge, right? If you're playing a character that you don't necessarily agree with, or the way he's going about things or the way he chooses to say these things, well, it's my job is to make them believable. He says some funny shit, however crude and inappropriate it is. It is funny.

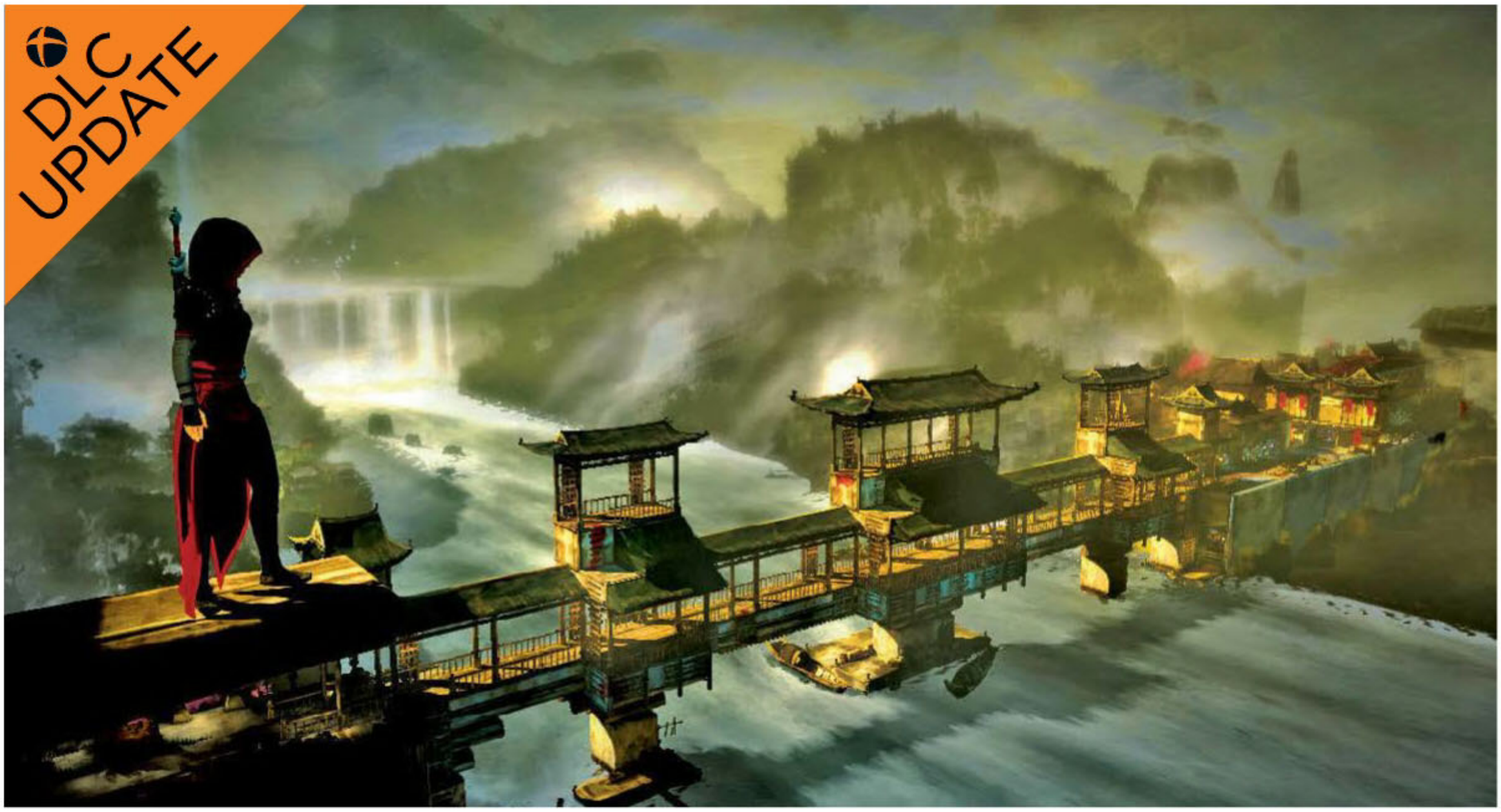
He *is* funny – we love Trevor – and in many ways, he's a brilliant reflection of our culture…
I think he's like the id of the game. If you're going to go into this world – which is fantasy – and you're someone who gets to say what he wants to say, f*** with what he wants to, and do what he wants to do! If I was a gamer, that's the sort of character I would be interested in. If you walk down the street or in a normal situation, who hasn't thought, 'Man I'd just love to f***ing clock that idiot upside the head,' but if you do that in real life there are consequences, you can't do it! But, if you're going to go into a world of escape and fantasy, shit, that's pretty fun!

Do you still speak with your co-stars Shawn Fonteno [Franklin Clinton] and Ned Luke [Michael De Santa]?
We do still keep in touch, though I don't get to see them as much as I would like. But we formed a brotherhood, really. It was three and a half years of working on a project with these guys; you share a lot of ups and downs. It's part of the beauty of the business really, you can make these intense relationships – Ned and Shawn are the salt of the earth. Really, the blessing of the job was meeting all these amazing people, the crew, the director, everyone. It was a really great thing, those boys will always be in my circle.

If the opportunity came up to voice Trevor again, would you?
I certainly wouldn't turn down the opportunity to revisit that character again, just because it is such a wonderful character. It was so much fun, I think there is a lot can be done with him. It was such a wonderful experience, such a great group of people and Rockstar's wonderful to work with, so, yeah, I certainly wouldn't discount any opportunity [to return].

If you want to see more Trevor, then *Grand Theft Auto V* is out now on Xbox One (and Xbox 360). You can read our full review of the updated version in the next issue of **X-ONE**.

Steven Ogg worked on *GTA V* for four years, providing full-motion capture and voice acting to the roll of everybody's favourite lunatic, Trevor Phillips.



ASSASSIN'S CREED UNITY: SEASON PASS

Yet another Assassin's Creed sub-series is launching

This time of the year is always terrible for new DLC. With so many new games out on the near horizon vying for your attention, publishers prefer to hold out on releasing worthwhile content until the Christmas madness subsides. Instead, what you'll likely see filling the Xbox One Games Store is a ton of empty promises in the form of Season Passes. It's tough for us to recommend that you go out and spend another £20 on content it's impossible to anticipate the quality of (remember that awful *Dead Rising 3* DLC, for example?). But Ubisoft is packing *Assassin's Creed: Unity*'s Season Pass with so much diverse content that it's piqued our interest.

First up, the Pass will include an epilogue to the *Assassin's Creed: Unity* titled *Dead Kings*. It'll take Arno to Saint-Denis as he explores a brand new locale full of dangerous new wildlife. You'll also be able to get your hands-on brand new weaponry, such as a Guillotine Gun – which looks like a prototype grenade launcher equipped to fire bayonets – and a double handed war axe. You'll also have access to three new co-op missions back in Paris, and over 30 new items of clothing.

Right then, now that we've got the boring stuff out of the way we can move onto what's got us super jazzed about the package. *Assassin's Creed Chronicles: China*. That's right, yet *another* full *Assassin's Creed* is coming. In many ways, we're honestly surprised that the franchise and brand has become the behemoth it is, but Ubisoft is confident it can move into the 2.5D side-scrolling space as well.

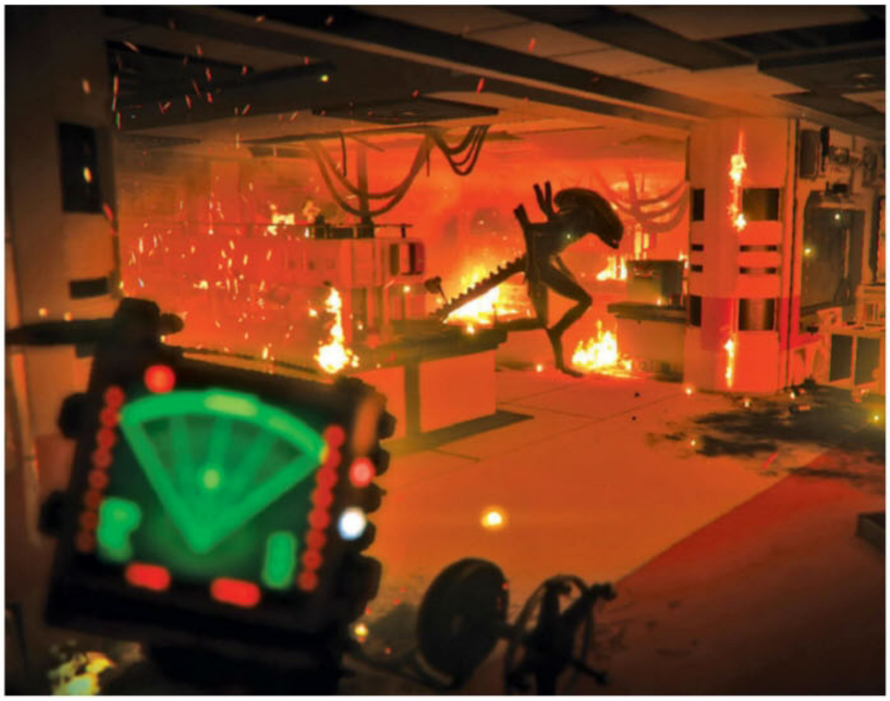
Chronicles: China is due to be made available early 2015, and takes Animus users to a completely new locale for the series: 16th century China. We'll be dropping into the shoes of Shao Jun – who last appeared in the novelisation of *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* and *Revelation*'s animated epilogue, *Embers*. She'll be returning to Beijing to avenge her fallen brotherhood, and she'll be doing it in a way that series regulars might not recognise.

Inspiration is clearly drawn from the likes of *Mark Of The Ninja* and *Shinobi* putting a heavier emphasis on stealth and precise movement than what we traditionally see from the series proper. It'll be a welcomed change of pace from the abundance of violence that seems to pervade over *Unity*'s French Revolution meltdown.

This spin-off will be part of the Season Pass, though it will eventually land as a standalone release on the Xbox One Store, and its success will no doubt create or kill another branch of the *Assassin's Creed* franchise. We're hoping Ubisoft continues to take these types of creative risks.

ASSASSIN'S CREED UNITY

Unity arrived just after we went to print, however it's shaping up to be one of the most interesting and epic *Asssassin's Creed* games in the series to date. Let's hope it doesn't end up like *ACIII*!



ALIEN ISOLATION: CORPORATE LOCKDOWN DLC

Sega is continuing to expand the world of *Alien Isolation* with the *Corporate Lockdown* DLC pack. Starring Seegson executive Ransome, the content will task you with making it through three new challenge maps alive. Severance, Scorched Earth and Loose Ends are all set before Ripley makes it aboard the Nostromo, and should give players an idea of what the ship was like during the first days of the Alien's assault.

MIDDLE-EARTH: SHADOW OF MORDOR: POWER OF SHADOW

Shadow Of Mordor proved to be one of this year's biggest surprises, and so it's always great when a studio supports a game with a bunch of free DLC. *Power Of Shadow* lets you play as Sauron's servant The Black Hand, not to mention offering three new Epic Runes to really help you ruin the days of Orcs all across Mordor. This is well worth a download.

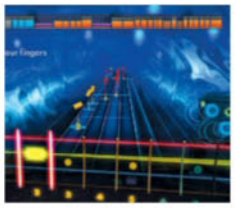
FIFA 15

Did you shelve *FIFA 15* after growing frustrated with the problems surrounding shooting and goalkeepers? It's time to give it another try then, you'll be happy to hear. A free patch has addressed the issues with goalkeepers *constantly* spilling the ball, while shooting has been balanced across the board. EA has heard your complaints and attempted to remedy them, which is always nice.

5 BEST MUSIC PACKS THIS MONTH

FANTASIA: MUSIC EVOLVED – ROCK EXPANSION

Bundled free with the digital edition of Fantasia, this offers a rock remix of some of the game's main tracks such as *Applause* and *Message In A Bottle*.



ROCKSMITH – AUDIOSLAVE SONG PACK

There's plenty of Rocksmith packs out every month, but the Audioslave interactive lessons caught our eye this time out. Annoy your housemates by trying to replicate Tom Morello's iconic sounds.

2,108,800
Flawless!
Flawless!

DANCE CENTRAL SPOTLIGHT LAUNCH DLC

Dance Central Spotlight launched at a cheap £9.99 price, but it had a limited track list. You'll need to purchase additional songs for real fun. Our favourites were *Love Shack* from The B-52's, and *Summertime Sadness* from Lana Del Rey.

FANTASIA: MUSIC EVOLVED – POP EXPANSION

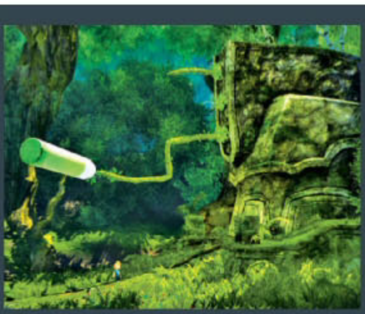
The likes of *Seven Nation Army* by The White Stripes and Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody* get pop-flavoured playable reworkings in this expansion. It's further incentive to buy the digital edition.

DANCE CENTRAL: SPOTLIGHT: JUSTIN BIEBER SONGPACK

Do you want to make sure everyone lets you play *Dance Central* Spotlight in peace? Buy this Justin Bieber songpack, and you too can learn how to dance like an over-appreciated asshat.

10 EASIEST XBOX ONE GAMES FOR ACHIEVEMENTS

GAMES ARE ALL ABOUT GIVING BUT, DAMN IT, WE WANT MORE! LUCKILY X-ONE IS HERE TO GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE QUICK AND DIRTY ACHIEVEMENTS THAT'LL UP YOUR GS



MAX: THE CURSE OF BROTHERHOOD

Press Play
2013

An overlooked indie gem that debuted on Xbox One at the end of the last year, *Max: The Curse Of Brotherhood* is not only one of the most inventive platforming titles to arrive in the last few years but it's great for when it comes to bagging yourself some easy Achievements. The toughest of the bunch is getting through the game without dying, as we can't imagine anyone doing that on the first playthrough. That's not necessarily a bad thing, as you'll find yourself invested in one of the most underrated games to hit the system since it launched.

CHILD OF LIGHT

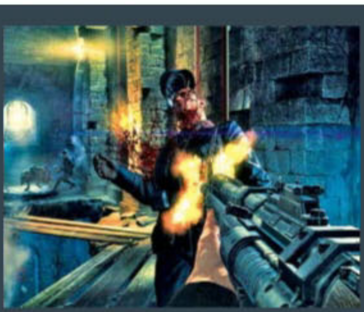
Ubisoft Montreal
2014

Probably the easiest game on the list in regards to unlocking Achievements. *Child Of Light* is Ubisoft's whimsical role-playing game that uses oldschool game mechanics in a beautiful watercolour fantasy world and garnered much-deserved accolades for its concept. What's more, it chucks out Achievements all over the place like they're going out of fashion, meaning that one pass at the game's enjoyable if languid campaign should have you grabbing all of the 1000G on offer. It might be worth checking an Achievement guide before jumping in but with *Child Of Light* you're guaranteed to be 1000G up in just a matter of hours.

KILLER INSTINCT

Double Helix
2013

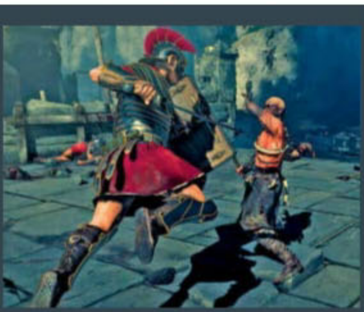
Xbox One's premium fighter doesn't mind forcing its players to undergo a bit of grinding, or at least making players wait for its next free fighter. But its Achievements list offers a glimmer of salvation. Most of these involve playing a set amount of matches with each of the fighters, or various different variations, so it's more time-consuming than posing any substantial challenge. However, if you've got the cash to blast on additional content you can always take a massive shortcut and simply pay your way to full 1000G glory by buying characters. Either way, it's easily attainable, you just might be a bit short of pocket afterwards.



WOLFENSTEIN: THE NEW ORDER

MachineGames
2014

For all the harping on about how *Wolfenstein: The New Order* was going to drag the first-person shooter genre back from its myriad influences to its hardcore roots, MachineGames' brawny bullet-buster felt like a bit of a cakewalk when it came to snagging Achievements. Sure, the tougher difficulty settings will put you through your paces, and the campaign is sizeable enough to keep you embedded in Nazi entrails for quite some time. But almost everything else needed to 100% this meat-headed blaster you'll easily discover in any one of the handy online guides.



RYSE: SON OF ROME

Crytek
2013

Ryse: Son Of Rome was one of the most eye-poppingly gorgeous games to land on Xbox One to date, but what looked even better than the sun-swept Italian vistas at dusk was the sight of all the Achievements being unlocked. If you tackle the game on its toughest difficulty, then you can gain most of the Gs in one playthrough. However, don't forget to dip into the underrated multiplayer, which has a large chunk of the game's Achievements locked away. It'll take a little while to get them all, but by the end you'll feel like a champion of the coliseum.

LOCOCYCLE

Twisted Pixel
2013

While the game itself was right down in the dregs of the Xbox One's launch window, players at least found themselves reaping the benefits of the new 1000G standard on Live games. Savvy players can more or less polish off the entire Achievement list here on a single playthrough with little strain, only chaining together a high combo streak potentially proving irksome – although, it arguably pales in comparison to the painful ordeal of actually playing through the campaign. If you're brave enough to face *LocoCycle*, then your gamerscore will at least be thankful. Although, mercy on those brave souls that dare face the dorment terror.

STRIKE SUIT ZERO

Born Ready Games
2014

There are not a huge amount of Achievements to get here, which is, frankly, why trying to blast through these at lightspeed is worth your while. Not only that but the ones that are up for grabs are relatively easy to capture without having to invest a huge amount of hours into replaying the game. There's a couple of obscure ones that you might need a little guidance in discovering – particularly the Shoot The Moon Achievement – but if you find a wiki for a bit of advice, it won't be long before you'll be blasting through space as king of the universe. Or just a few Gs better off than your mates on Live.

LEGO MARVEL SUPER HEROES

TT Games
2013

In our opinion, it's the best *Lego* game since the series launched all those many moons ago, dutifully balancing kid-friendly bish-bash gameplay and a huge amount of fan service for Marvel aficionados. What's more, the Achievements packed in are pretty easy to get through if you've got the time to invest. The vast majority of which involve unlocking the various characters from the Marvel comic vaults and the level of gratification from populating the world with the likes of Rocket Raccoon, Squirrel Girl, Howard The Duck, and every other animal-based superhuman is well worth the lengthy grind required.

MURDERED: SOUL SUSPECT

Airtight Games
2014

Murdered: Soul Suspect may not have been the spectral *L.A. Noire* that gamers had pinned their hopes on but it did prove to inject a little life into the gamerscores of those that persevered through its middling campaign. Most of the list involves hitting narrative objectives, but there's some collectables that need to be found to get the full 100 per cent, so you'll need to check in with a guide to make your way through it as efficiently as possible. The game might've dropped off a lot of people's radars, but with an Achievement list like this it'll definitely find a second life among hardcore Xbox fans.

PLANTS VS. ZOMBIES: GARDEN WARFARE

PopCap Games
2014

There are a lot of Achievements here, but if you're a fan of PopCap's third-dimension action-orientated strategy title then you won't mind putting a bit more time in to get the whole 1000G available. There's nothing that stands out among the list as challenging to unlock, but with a whole raft of enemies to defeat and various character-types to level up, there's a lot of variations of the same tasks. So it's a bit of a time-drainer but plant your feet, brave the elements and your gamerscore will grow.

NEXT ISSUE

Evolve

Get ready for the ultimate survival guide to Turtle Rock Studios' essential multiplayer monster hunter

+

THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT

THE FUTURE OF DARK SOULS

Note: While we'll do our best to ensure that the above fits into **X-ONE**, it might fall by the wayside. This isn't necessarily our fault, but we'll do everything we can to keep our promises.

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